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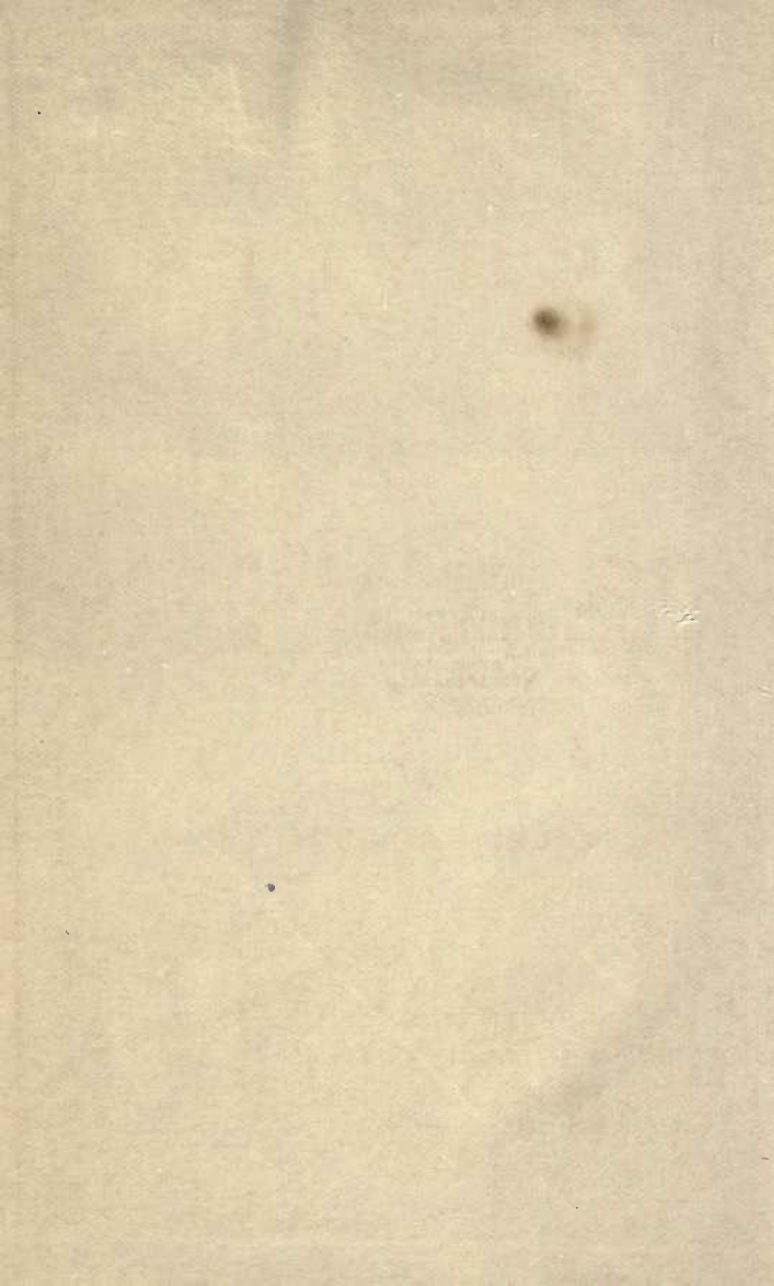
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THE PLAYS

OF

ÆSCHYLUS

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HENRY MORLEY

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

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INTRODUCTION.

ÆSCHYLUS was born in the year 525 before Christ. He was born in Eleusis, a town of Attica, placed on a height near the sea, and opposite the island of Salamis. The river Cephissus flowed through the surrounding plain. Eleusis was a town sacred to the worship of Demeter (Latin, Ceres), Mother Earth, and her daughter Persephone (Proserpine) in whom Pluto took a share typical of the change from summer to winter in the seasons. From Athens to Eleusis there was a Sacred Way with monuments on either side of it, and a Temple of Apollo. Once a year a great procession travelled on that way from Athens to the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, the most sacred in all Greece. The old temple of Demeter in Eleusis was standing in the time of Æschylus, whose father Euphorion is supposed to have been one of its priests. That temple was burnt by the Persians in the year 484 before Christ, in the lifetime of the poet, who was then forty-one years old. The struggle with Persia brought out the full energy of Greece. Literature, which is the expression of the highest life of man, always rises with the energies of which it comes. A people battling strenuously for what it cares for, and should care for, with its entire mind, lifts its thought up to the heights on which alone true poets can be bred. Such energies make strength in every way, and with it the force that creates wealth: then

follows luxury, by which men are tempted to rival one another in misuse of time ; then literature comes down from the heights, descends to satire, or else babbles elegant and empty criticism on the regions she has left. But *Æschylus* was born among the mysteries that felt God's presence in the very earth he trod, and in a day of conflict that could put heroic life into the common citizen of Greece. When thirty-five years old, *Æschylus* not only fought at Marathon, but earned public distinction there "among the bravest of the brave." He was born poet, and poet born into the light of noble days. An old fable tells that when *Æschylus* was a boy *Dionysus* (Latin, *Bacchus*) appeared in dream to him. The boy had fallen asleep while watching a vineyard, the god in his dream bade him write tragedy, and when he awoke his first verses were made. His first public appearance as a tragic writer was at the age of twenty-five, but he was not victorious over competitors until the year in which the Persians burnt the temple of *Demeter* in *Eleusis*, when *Æschylus* was forty-one years old. He was fifty-three years old when he gained (B.C. 472) the prize at Athens with a trilogy, a set of three connected pieces of which "*The Persians*" was the first. And this is the earliest of the plays of *Æschylus* that has come down to us. He is said to have written seventy plays ; but there remain to us only the seven which are here translated.

The Persian war came to an end in the year 470 B.C., and *Cimon*, the son of *Miltiades*, had sway in Athens. Two years afterwards, B.C. 468, *Æschylus*, who had then already produced the "*Seven against Thebes*," was defeated in the contest with a younger tragedian, *Sophocles*. Soon afterwards *Æschylus* went to the Court of *Hiero*, King of *Syracuse*. It is said that he had been accused at Athens of impiety for revealing some part of the *Eleusinian* mysteries in which he had been early initiated. *Hiero* died in the year 467 B.C., and *Æschylus* nine years later, at the age of sixty-seven, in the

year 458 B.C., produced his trilogy known as the *Oresteia*, the one remaining example of the practice of establishing a poetical connection by unity of subject and design in the three tragedies that had been frequently the number offered in competition. This practice Æschylus was first to adopt. The three plays of the *Oresteia* are the *Agamemnon*, the *Choëphoræ* and the *Eumenides*. But his plays showed that he was a hero of Marathon not in accord with the political life of Athens as it then stood. In the *Eumenides* there was an unpopular chorus of Furies, and Æschylus again left Athens, to die two years afterwards, aged sixty-nine, at Gela in Sicily, B.C. 456. An oracle is said to have foretold that Æschylus would die by a blow from heaven. This oracle is said to have been fulfilled by the manner of his death. An eagle wishing to crack the shell of a tortoise had carried it up to let it fall upon a stone. Mistaking the bald head of the poet for a stone, it let the tortoise fall on that. Spenser applied the tradition to Archbishop Grindal struck by the bolt of Elizabeth's wrath, the Queen being the eagle and the tortoise a political problem :

For sitting so with baréd scalp
 An eagle soaréd high
 That, weening his white head was chalk,
 A shell-fish down let fly.
 She weened the shell-fish to have broke
 But therewith bruised his brain :
 So now astonied with the stroke
 He lies in lingering pain.

Æschylus was the first of the three great tragedians of ancient Greece; first in time and highest in power. Sophocles said that he did what was right without knowing it. He himself spoke of his plays as fragments from the great banquet of Homer. His grandeur of thought becomes akin to the prophetic strain of an Isaiah, when in his "*Prometheus Bound*" he shadows out a Fate before which the old gods shall bow, and pierces to the sense of days that are not yet.

From dramatic recitations by a single actor, joined to song and dance of a trained chorus, Æschylus first passed to the employment of a second actor, each actor changing his mask to change his part. This was the first introduction of a true dramatic dialogue, and the dialogue then became the main part of the play, the use of the chorus being limited. But a second actor gave opportunity only for scenes of dialogue between two persons of the story at one time. Sophocles first introduced a third actor to take part in dialogue upon the stage, and Æschylus afterwards adopted this improvement. Æschylus also improved the masks in use, and the whole manner of representing persons of the story, and he taught the chorus to be actors, enforcing by their gestures and their dance movements the poetic purpose of each scene. To him a "well-trod stage" was a first necessity, if he was to show poetry in action.

We have come down from Olympus to the mole-hill—say, rather, the mud-heap—when we have left Prometheus for the Parisian stage villain in evening dress who lolls and lounges and lights cigarettes. But let Apollo answer it. The sun himself breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion. From Æschylus to Monsieur Maquignon is it not change from free flight of the soul to lively rotting of the body it has left? In the name of Æschylus, their great forefather, let dramatists and actors dare to mount. Some dare; let others follow. Life is longer on the hill than by the marsh. There is not a poor super on the stage who has no day to mark with a victory in which he may find, like Æschylus, his Marathon, and through which he learns to flash, out of a true thought in himself, life-giving fire into the true conception of the poet, consuming fire on the false offerings that scatter filth upon the altar of his Art.

H. M.

August 1886.

PROMETHEUS CHAINED.

ÆSCHYLUS wrote three Tragedies on the story of Prometheus: the first exhibited him as carrying the sacred gift of fire to men; the second as chained to Caucasus; the third as delivered from his chains. Of these the second only remains to us. The short account which Prometheus gives in this of the barbarous state of man before he taught them the civilizing arts makes us regret the loss of the first; and we have good reason to imagine that the portrait of Hercules in the third, delineated by this great master, must have been inimitable. There is in this remaining drama a sublimity of conception, a strength, a fire, a certain savage dignity peculiar to this bold writer. The scenery is the greatest that the human imagination ever formed: the wild and desolate rock frowning over the sea, the stern and imperious sons of Pallas and Styx holding up Prometheus to its rifted side whilst Vulcan fixes his chains, the Nymphs of the Ocean flying to its summit to commiserate his unhappy state, old Oceanus on his hippogriff, the appearance of Iö, the descent of Mercury, the whirlwind tearing up the sands, swelling the boisterous sea, and dashing its waves to the stars, the vollied thunders rolling all their fiery rage against the rock, and the figure of Prometheus unappalled at this terrible storm, and bidding defiance to Jupiter, would

require the utmost effort of Salvator Rosa's genius to represent them. Yet is the horrid greatness of this drama tempered with much tenderness; the reluctance of Vulcan to execute the severe commands of Jupiter is finely contrasted to the eager, unfeeling insolence of Strength and Force; the character of Iö is mournfully gentle; and the Oceanitidæ are of a most amiable mildness joined to a firm but modest prudence; even the untameable ferocity of Prometheus discovers under it a benevolence that interests us deeply in his sufferings.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

STRENGTH AND FORCE.

VULCAN.

PROMETHEUS.

OCEANUS.

IO.

MERCURY.

CHORUS.

NYMPHS OF THE OCEAN.

STRENGTH, FORCE, VULCAN, PROMETHEUS.

STRENGTH. At length then to the wide earth's extreme bounds,

To Scythia are we come, those pathless wilds
Where human footstep never marked the ground.
Now, Vulcan, to thy task; at Jove's command,
Fix to these high-projecting rocks this vain
Artificer of man; each massy link
Draw close, and bind his adamantine chains.
Thy radiant pride, the fiery flame, that lends
Its aid to every art, he stole, and bore
The gift to mortals; for which bold offence
The gods assign him this just punishment;

That he may learn to reverence the power
Of Jove, and moderate his love to man.

VULCAN. Stern powers, your harsh commands have here
Nor find resistance. My less hardy mind, [an end,
Averse to violence, shrinks back, and dreads
To bind a kindred god to this wild cliff,
Exposed to every storm; but strong constraint
Compels me; I must steel my soul, and dare :
Joye's high commands require a prompt observance.
High-thoughted son of truth-directing Themis,
Thee with indissoluble chains, perforce,
Must I now rivet to this savage rock,
Where neither human voice, nor human form,
Shall meet thine eye, but parching in the beams,
Unsheltered, of yon fervid sun, thy bloom
Shall lose its grace, and make thee wish th' approach
Of grateful evening mild, whose dusky stole
Spangled with gems shall veil his fiery heat ;
And night upon the whitening ground breathe froze,
But soon to melt, touched by his orient ray.
So shall some present ill with varied pain
Afflict thee ; nor is he yet born, whose hand
Shall set thee free : thus thy humanity
Receives its meed, that thou, a god, regardless
Of the gods' anger, honouredst mortal man
With courtesies, which justice not approves.
Therefore the joyless station of this rock
Unsleeping, unreclining, shalt thou keep,
And many a groan, many a loud lament
Throw out in vain, nor move the rig'rous breast
Of Jove, relentless in his youthful power.

STR. No more ; why these delays, this foolish pity ?
Dost thou not hate a god by gods abhorred,
That prostitutes thy radiant boast to man ?

VUL. Strong are the ties of kindred and long converse.

STR. Well ; but to disobey thy sire's commands,
Darest thou do that? Is not that fear more strong?

VUL. Soft pity never touched thy ruthless mind.

STR. Will thy vain pity bring relief? Forbear,
Nor waste thyself in what avails not him.

VUL. Abhorred be all the fine skill of my hands.

STR. And why abhorred? For of these present toils
Thy art, in very truth, is not the cause.

VUL. Yet wish I it had been some other's lot.

STR. All have their lot appointed, save to reign
In heaven, for liberty is Jove's alone.

VUL. Truth guides thy words, nor have I to gainsay.

STR. Why thus reluctant then to bind his chains?
Let not thy sire observe these slow delays.

VUL. The manacles are ready, thou mayst see them.

STR. Bind them around his hands ; with all thy force
Strike, nail them fast, drive them into the rock.

VUL. Thus far the work is finished, and not slightly.

STR. Strike harder, strain them, let them not relax ;
His craft will work unthought-of ways t' escape.

VUL. This arm too is inextricably fixed.

STR. And now clasp this secure, that he may learn
How impotent his craft, opposed to Jove.

VUL. This work he only can with justice blame.

STR. Across his breast draw now this stubborn bar
Of adamant, fix firm its sharpened point.

VUL. Thy miseries, Prometheus, I bewail.

STR. Still dost thou linger? Still bewail the foes
Of Jove? Take heed lest thou bewail thyself.

VUL. Thou seest an object horrible to sight.

STR. I see him honoured as his deeds deserve.
But haste thee, fix this strong habergeon on him.

VUL. Constraint lies on me ; urge not thou its rigour.

STR. Urge thee? I will, and in a higher tone.
Downwards ; with all thy force enring his legs.

VUL. This too is finished, with no ling'ring speed.

STR. Strike hard, drive deep their penetrating points.
Severe his eye, who nicely scans these works.

VUL. Thy voice is harsh, and rugged as thy form.

STR. Now fair befall thy softness, yet upbraid not
My ruder and unpitying ruthlessness.

VUL. Let us be gone ; the rig'rous task is done.

STR. Now triumph in thy insolence, now steal
The glory of the gods, and bear the gift
To mortal man ; will they relieve thee now ?
False is the boasted prudence of thy name,
Or wanted now to free thee from thy fate.

PROMETHEUS (*alone*). Ethereal air, and ye swift-winged
Ye rivers springing from fresh founts, ye waves, [winds,
That o'er th' interminable ocean wreath
Your crisped smiles, thou all-producing earth,
And thee, bright sun, I call, whose flaming orb
Views the wide world beneath, see what, a god,
I suffer from the gods ; with what fierce pains,
Behold, what tortures for revolving ages
I here must struggle ; such unseemly chains
This new-raised ruler of the gods devised.
Ah me ! That groan bursts from my anguished heart,
My present woes and future to bemoan.
When shall these suff'rings find their destined end ?
But why that vain inquiry ? My clear sight
Looks through the future ; unforeseen no ill
Shall come on me ; behoves me then to bear
Patient my destined fate, knowing how vain
To struggle with necessity's strong power.
But to complain, or not complain, alike
Is unavailable. For favours shown

To mortal man I bear this weight of woe ;
Hid in a hollow cane the fount of fire
I privately conveyed, of every art
Productive, and the noblest gift to men.
And for this slight offence, woe, woe is me !
I bear these chains, fixed to this savage rock,
Unsheltered from th' inclemencies of th' air.
Ah me ! what sound, what softly breathing odour
Steals on my sense ? Be you immortal gods,
Or mortal men, or of th' heroic race,
Whoe'er have reached this wild rock's extreme cliff,
Spectators of my woes, or what your purpose,
Ye see me bound, a wretched god, abhorred
By Jove, and every god that treads his courts,
For my fond love to man. Ah me ! again
I hear the sound of flutt'ring nigh ; the air
Pants to the soft beat of light-moving wings :
All, that approaches now, is dreadful to me.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Forbear thy fears : a friendly train
On busy pennons flutt'ring light,
We come, our sire not asked in vain,
And reach this promontory's height.
The clanging iron's horrid sound
Re-echoed through our caves profound ;
And though my cheek glows with shame's crimson dye,
Thus with unsandalled foot with winged speed I fly.

PRO. Ah me ! ah me !

Ye virgin sisters, who derive your race
From fruitful Thetis, and th' embrace
Of old Oceanus, your sire, that rolls
Around the wide world his unquiet waves,
This way turn your eyes, behold

With what a chain fixed to this rugged steep
Th' unenvied station of the rock I keep.

CHOR. I see, I see ; and o'er my eyes,
Surcharg'd with sorrow's tearful rain,
Dark'ning the misty clouds arise ;
I see thy adamantine chain ;
In its strong grasp thy limbs confined,
And withering in the parching wind :

Such the stern power of heaven's new-sceptred lord,
And law-controlling Jove's irrevocable word.

PRO. Beneath the earth,
Beneath the gulfs of Tartarus, that spread
Interminable o'er the dead,
Had his stern fury fixed this rigid chain,
Nor gods nor men had triumphed in my pain.
But pendent in th' ethereal air,
The pageant gratifies my ruthless foes,
That gaze, insult, and glory in my woes.

CHOR. Is there a god, whose sullen soul
Feels a stern joy in thy despair ?
Owns he not pity's soft control,
And drops in sympathy the tear ?
All, all, save Jove ; with fury driven,
Severe he tames the sons of heaven ;
And he will tame them, till some power arise
To wrest from his strong hand the sceptre of the skies.

PRO. Yet he, e'en he,
That o'er the gods holds his despotic reign,
And fixes this disgraceful chain,
Shall need my aid, the counsels to disclose
Destructive to his honour and his throne.
But not the honied blandishment, that flows
From his alluring lips, shall aught avail ;
His rigid menaces shall fail ;

Nor will I make the fatal secret known,
Till his proud hands this galling chain unbind,
And his remorse soothes my indignant mind.

CHOR. Bold and intrepid is thy soul,

Fired with resentment's warmest glow ;

And thy free voice disdains control,

Disdains the tort'ring curb of woe.

My softer bosom, thrilled with fear

Lest heavier ills await thee here,

By milder counsels wishes thee repose :

For Jove's relentless rage no tender pity knows.

PRO. Stern though he be,

And, in the pride of power terrific drest,

Rears o'er insulted right his crest,

Yet gentler thoughts shall mitigate his soul,

When o'er his head this storm shall roll ;

'Then shall his stubborn indignation bend,

Submit to sue, and court me for a friend.

CHOR. But say, relate at large for what offence

Committed doth the wrath of Jove inflict

This punishment so shameful, so severe :

Instruct us, if the tale shocks not thy soul.

PRO. 'Tis painful to relate it, to be silent

Is pain : each circumstance is full of woe.

When stern debate amongst the gods appeared,

And discord in the courts of heaven was roused ;

Whilst against Saturn some conspiring willed

To pluck him from the throne, that Jove might reign ;

And some, averse, with ardent zeal opposed

Jove's rising power and empire o'er the gods ;

My counsels, though discreetest, wisest, best,

Moved not the Titans, those impetuous sons

Of Ouranus and Terra, whose high spirits,

Disdaining milder measures, proudly weened

To seize by force the sceptre of the sky.
Oft did my goddess mother, Themis now,
Now Gaia, under various names designed,
Herself the same, foretell me the event,
That not by violence, that not by power,
But gentle arts, the royalty of heaven
Must be obtained. Whilst thus my voice advised,
Their headlong rage deigned me not e'en a look.
What then could wisdom dictate, but to take
My mother, and with voluntary aid
Abet the cause of Jove? Thus by my counsels
In the dark deep Tartarean gulf enclosed
Old Saturn lies, and his confederate powers.
For these good deeds the tyrant of the skies
Repays me with these dreadful punishments.
For foul mistrust of those that serve them best
Breathes its black poison in each tyrant's heart.
Ask you the cause for which he tortures me?
I will declare it. On his father's throne
Scarce was he seated, on the chiefs of heaven
He showered his various honours; thus confirming
His royalty; but for unhappy mortals
Had no regard, and all the present race
Willed to extirpate, and to form anew.
None, save myself, opposed his will; I dared;
And boldly pleading saved them from destruction,
Saved them from sinking to the realms of night.
For this offence I bend beneath these pains,
Dreadful to suffer, piteous to behold:
For mercy to mankind I am not deemed
Worthy of mercy; but with ruthless hate
In this uncouth appointment am fixed here
A spectacle dishonourable to Jove.

CHOR. Of iron is he formed and adamant,

Whose breast with social sorrow does not melt
At thy afflictions : I nor wished to see them,
Nor see them but with anguish at my heart.

PRO. It is a sight that strikes my friends with pity.

CHOR. But had th' offence no further aggravation ?

PRO. I hid from men the foresight of their fate.

CHOR. What couldst thou find to remedy that ill ?

PRO. I sent blind Hope t' inhabit in their hearts.

CHOR. A blessing hast thou given to mortal man.

PRO. Nay more, with generous zeal I gave them fire.

CHOR. Do mortals now enjoy the blazing gift ?

PRO. And by it shall give birth to various arts.

CHOR. For such offences doth the wrath of Jove
Thus punish thee, relaxing nought of pain ?

And is no bound prescribed to thy affliction ?

PRO. None else, but when his own will shall incline
him.

CHOR. Who shall incline his will ? Hast thou no hope ?
Dost thou not see that thou hast much offended ?

But to point out th' offence to me were painful ;
And might sound harsh to thee : forbear we then ;
Bethink thee how thy ills may find an end.

PRO. How easy, when the foot is not entangled
In misery's thorny maze, to give monitions
And precepts to th' afflicted ! Of these things
I was not unadvised ; and my offence
Was voluntary ; in man's cause I drew
These evils on my head : but ills like these,
On this ærial rock to waste away,
This desert and unsocial precipice,
My mind presaged it not. But cease your grief,
Wail not my present woes ; on the rough point
Of this firm cliff descend, and there observe
What further may betide me, e'en the whole

Of my hard fate ; indulge me, O indulge
This my request, and sympathize with me
Thus wretched ; for affliction knows no rest,
But rolls from breast to breast its vagrant tide.

CHOR. Not to th' unwilling are thy words directed.
With light foot now this nimble-moving seat,
This pure air, through whose liquid fields the birds
Winnow their wanton way, I leave ; and now
Alight I on this rude and craggy rock,
Anxious to hear all thy unhappy tale.

OCEANUS, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

OCEANUS. Far distant, through the vast expanse of air,
To thee, Prometheus, on this swift-winged steed
Whose neck unreined obeys my will, I come,
In social sorrow sympathizing with thee.
To this, the near affinity of blood
Moves me ; and be assured, that tie apart,
There is not who can tax my dear regard
Deeper than thou : believe me, this is truth,
Not the false glozings of a flatt'ring tongue.
Instruct me then in what my power may serve thee,
For never shalt thou say thou hast a friend
More firm, more constant, than Oceanus.

PRO. Ah me ! What draws thee hither ? Art thou come
Spectator of my toils ? How hast thou ventured
To leave the ocean waves, from thee so called,
Thy rock-roofed grottos arched by nature's hand,
And land upon this iron-teeming earth ?
Comest thou to visit and bewail my ills ?
Behold this sight, behold this friend of Jove,
Th' assertor of his empire, bending here
Beneath a weight of woes by him inflicted.

OCEA. I see it all, and wish to counsel thee,

Wise as thou art, to milder measures : learn
To know thyself ; new model thy behaviour,
As the new monarch of the gods requires.
What if thy harsh and pointed speech should reach
The ear of Jove, though on his distant throne
High-seated, might they not inflame his rage
T' inflict such tortures, that thy present pains
Might seem a recreation and a sport ?
Cease then, unhappy sufferer, cease thy braves,
And meditate the means of thy deliverance.
To thee perchance this seems the cold advice
Of doting age ; yet, trust me, woes like these
Are earnings of the lofty-sounding tongue.
But thy unbending spirit disdains to yield
E'en to afflictions, to the present rather
Ambitious to add more. Yet shalt thou not,
If my voice may be heard, lift up thy heel
To kick against the pricks ; so rough, thou seest
So uncontrolled the monarch of the skies.
But now I go, and will exert my power,
If haply I may free thee from thy pains.
Meanwhile be calm ; forbear this haughty tone :
Has not thy copious wisdom taught thee this,
That mischief still attends the petulant tongue ?

PRO. I gratulate thy fortune, that on thee
No blame hath lighted, though associate with me
In all, and daring equally. But now
Forbear, of my condition take no care ;
Thou wilt not move him ; nothing moves his rigour :
Take heed then, lest to go brings harm on thee.

OCEA. Wiser for others than thyself I find
Thy thoughts ; yet shalt thou not withhold my speed.
And I have hopes, with pride I speak it, hopes
T' obtain this grace, and free thee from thy sufferings.

PRO. For this thou hast my thanks; thy courtesy
With grateful memory ever shall be honoured.
But think not of it, the attempt were vain,
Nor would thy labour profit me; cease then,
And leave me to my fate: however wretched,
I wish not to impart my woes to others.

OCEA. No; for thy brother's fate, th' unhappy Atlas,
Afflicts me: on the western shore he stands,
Supporting on his shoulders the vast pillar
Of Heaven and Earth, a weight of cumbrous grasp.
Him too, the dweller of Cilicia's caves,
I saw, with pity saw, Earth's monstrous son,
With all his hundred heads, subdued by Force,
The furious Typhon, who 'gainst all the gods
Made war; his horrid jaws with serpent-hiss
Breathed slaughter, from his eyes the gorgon-glare
Of baleful lightnings flashed, as his proud force
Would rend from Jove his empire of the sky.
But him the vengeful bolt, instinct with fire,
Smote sore, and dashed him from his haughty vaunts,
Pierced through his soul, and withered all his strength.
Thus stretched out huge in length beneath the roots
Of Ætna, near Trinacria's narrow sea,
Astonied, blasted, spiritless he lies;
On whose high summit Vulcan holds his seat,
And forms the glowing mass. In times to come
Hence streams of torrent fire with hideous roar
Shall burst, and with its wasteful mouths devour
All the fair fields of fruitful Sicily.
Such rage shall Typhon, blasted as he is
With Jove's fierce lightning, pour incessant forth
In smoking whirlwinds and tempestuous flame.

PRO. Thou art not unexperienced, nor hast need
Of my instruction; save thyself, how best

Thy wisdom shall direct thee. I will bear
My present fate, till Jove's harsh wrath relents.

OCEA. Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that soft
speech

Is to distempered wrath medicinal?

PRO. When seasonably the healing balm's applied;
Else it exasperates the swelling heart.

OCEA. But in the fair endeavour, in th' attempt,
What disadvantage, tell me, dost thou see?

PRO. Unfruitful labour, and light-thoughted folly.

OCEA. Be that my weakness then. Oft when the wise
Appears not wise, he works the greatest good.

PRO. This will be deemed my simple policy.

OCEA. These words indeed remand me to my grotto.

PRO. Cease to bewail me, lest thou wake his wrath.

OCEA. What, the new monarch's of heaven's potent
throne?

PRO. Take care his indignation be not roused.

OCEA. Thy misery shall be my monitor.

PRO. Go then, be cautious, hold thy present judgment.

OCEA. Thy words add speed to my despatch. Already
My plumed steed his levelled wings displays
To fan the liquid air, through fond desire
In his own lodge his wearied speed to rest.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. For thee I heave the heart-felt sigh,

My bosom melting at thy woes;

For thee my tear-distilling eye

In streams of tender sorrow flows:

For Jove's imperious ruthless soul,

That scorns the power of mild control,

Chastens with horrid tort'ring pain

Not known to gods, before his iron reign.

E'en yet this ample region o'er
Hoarse strains of sullen woe resound,
Thy state, thy brother's state deplore,
Age-honoured glories ruined round.
Thy woes, beneath the sacred shade
Of Asia's pastured forests laid,
The chaste inhabitant bewails
Thy groins re-echoing through his plaintive vales.

The Colchian virgin, whose bold hand
Undaunted grasps the warlike spear ;
On earth's last verge the Scythian band,
The torpid lake Mæotis near ;
Arabia's martial race, that wield
The sharp lance in th' embattled field,
Through all their rock-built cities moan,
The crags of Caucasus return the groan.

One other, ere thy galling chain,
Of heaven's high sons with tortures quelled,
That rack each joint, each sinew strain,
Titanian Atlas I beheld ;
His giant strength condemned to bear
The solid, vast, and pond'rous sphere.
The springs whose fresh streams swell around,
The hoarse waves from their depths profound,
And all the gloomy realms below,
Sigh to his sighs, and murmur to his woe.

PRO. It is not pride ; deem nobler of me, virgins ;
It is not pride, that held me silent thus ;
The thought of these harsh chains, that hang me here,
Cuts to my heart. Yet who, like me, advanced
To their high dignity our new-raised gods ?

But let me spare the tale, to you well known.
The ills of man you've heard : I formed his mind,
And through the cloud of barb'rous ignorance
Diffused the beams of knowledge. I will speak,
Not taxing them with blame, but my own gifts
Displaying, and benevolence to them.
They saw indeed, they heard ; but what availed
Or sight, or sense of hearing, all things rolling
Like the unreal imagery of dreams,
In wild confusion mixed ? The lightsome wall
Of finer masonry, the raftered roof
They knew not ; but, like ants still buried, delved
Deep in the earth, and scooped their sunless caves.
Unmarked the seasons changed, the biting winter,
The flower perfumed spring, the ripening summer
Fertile of fruits. At random all their works,
Till I instructed them to mark the stars,
Their rising, and, a harder science yet,
Their setting. The rich train of marshalled numbers
I taught them, and the meet array of letters.
T' impress these precepts on their hearts I sent
Memory, the active mother of all wisdom.
I taught the patient steer to bear the yoke,
In all his toils joint-labourer with man.
By me the harnessed steed was trained to whirl
The rapid car, and grace the pride of wealth.
The tall barque, lightly bounding o'er the waves,
I taught its course, and winged its flying sail.
To man I gave these arts ; with all my wisdom
Yet want I now one art, that useful art
To free myself from these afflicting chains.

CHOR. Unseemly are thy sufferings, sprung from error
And impotence of mind. And now enclosed
With all these ills, as some unskilful leech

That sinks beneath his malady, thy soul
Desponds, nor seeks medicinal relief.

PRO. Hear my whole story, thou wilt wonder more,
What useful arts, what science I invented.

This first and greatest ; when the fell disease
Preyed on the human frame, relief was none,
Nor healing drug, nor cool refreshing draught,
Nor pain-assuaging unguent ; but they pined
Without redress, and wasted, till I taught them
To mix the balmy medicine, of power
To chase each pale disease, and soften pain.

I taught the various modes of prophecy,
What truth the dream portends, the omen what
Of nice distinction, what the casual sight
That meets us on the way, the flight of birds,
When to the right, when to the left they take
Their airy course, their various ways of life,
Their feuds, their fondnesses, their social flocks.
I taught th' Haruspex to inspect the entrails,
Their smoothness, and their colour to the gods
Grateful, the gall, the liver streaked with veins,
The limbs involved in fat, and the long chine
Placed on the blazing altar, from the smoke
And mounting flame to mark th' unerring omen.

These arts I taught. And all the secret treasures
Deep buried in the bowels of the earth,
Brass, iron, silver, gold, their use to man,
Let the vain tongue make what high vaunts it may,
Are my inventions all ; and, in a word,
Prometheus taught each useful art to man.

CHOR. Let not thy love to man o'erleap the bounds
Of reason, nor neglect thy wretched state ;
So my fond hope suggests thou shalt be free
From these base chains, nor less in power than Jove.

PRO. Not thus, it is not in the Fates that thus
These things should end ; crushed with a thousand wrongs,
A thousand woes, I shall escape these chains.

Necessity is stronger far than art.

CHO. Who then is ruler of necessity ?

PRO. The triple fates and unforgetting furies.

CHOR. Must Jove then yield to their superior power ?

PRO. He no way shall escape his destined fate.

CHOR. What, but eternal empire, is his fate ?

PRO. Thou may'st not know this now ; forbear t' inquire.

CHOR. Is it of moment what thou keep'st thus close ?

PRO. No more of this discourse, it is not time
Now to disclose that which requires the seal
Of strictest secrecy ; by guarding which
I shall escape the misery of these chains.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Never, never may my soul
Jove's all-ruling power defy ;
Never feel his harsh control,
Sov'reign ruler of the sky.
When the hallowed steer has bled,
When the sacred feast is spread,
'Midst the crystal waves below,
Whence father Ocean's boundless billows flow,
Let not my foot be slow ;
There, th' ethereal guests among,
No rude speech disgrace my tongue.
May my mind this rev'rence keep ;
Print it strong, and grave it deep.

Antistrophe.

When through life's extended scene
Hope her steadfast lustre throws,

Swells the soul with joy serene,
With sublimest triumph glows.
Seest thou this pure lustre shine ?
Are these heart-felt raptures thine ?
My cold blood curdles in my veins,
To see thy hideous woes, thy tort'ring pains,
And adamantine chains.
Thy free soul, untaught to fear,
Scorned the danger threat'ning near ;
And for mortals dared defy
The sovereign monarch of the sky.

Epode.

Vain thy ardour, vain thy grace,
They nor force nor aid repay ;
Like a dream man's feeble race,
Short-lived reptiles of a day.
Shall their weak devices move
Th' ordered harmony of Jove ?
Touched with pity of thy pain,
All sad and slow I pour the moral strain ;
Changed from that melting vein,
When the light mellifluous measure
Round thy bath, and round thy bed
For our sea-nymph sister spread,
Awoke young love and bridal pleasure
And poured the soul of harmony,
To greet the bright Hespione.

✓
IO, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

Io. Whither, ah, whither am I borne ?
To what rude shore, what barb'rous race ? O thou,
Whoe'er thou art, that chained to that bleak rock,
The seat of desolation, ruest thy crimes,

Say on what shore my wretched footsteps stray.—
 Again that sting !—Ah me, that form again !—
 With all his hundred eyes the earth-born Argus—
 Cover it, Earth ! See, how it glares upon me,
 The horrid spectre !—Wilt thou not, O Earth,
 Cover the dead, that from thy dark abyss
 He comes to haunt me, to pursue my steps,
 And drive me foodless o'er the barren strand ?
 Hoarse sounds the reed-compacted pipe, a note
 Sullen and drowsy.—Miserable me !
 Whither will these wide-wand'ring errors lead me ?
 How, son of Saturn, how have I offended,
 That with these stings, these tortures thou pursuest me,
 And drivest to madness my affrighted soul !
 Hear me, supreme of gods, O hear thy suppliant,
 Blast me with lightnings, bury me in th' earth,
 Or cast me to the monsters of the sea ;
 But spare these toils, spare these wide-wand'ring errors,
 Which drive me round the world, and know no rest.

CHOR. Hear'st thou the voice of this lamenting virgin ?
 For such she is, though in that form disguised.

PRO. I hear her griefs, that whirl her soul to madness,
 Daughter of Inachus, whose love enflames
 The heart of Jove ; hence Juno's jealous rage
 Drives the poor wanderer restless o'er the world.

IO. Whence is it that I hear my father's name ?
 Speak to my misery, tell me who thou art ;
 What wretch art thou, that to a wretch like me
 Utterest these truths, naming the malady,
 Which, heaven-inflicted, stings my tortured soul
 To frenzy ? Hence with hurrying steps I rove
 Foodless, pursued by never ceasing wrath.
 Ah me ! What child of misery ever suffered
 Misery like mine ? But tell me, clearly tell me

What woes await me yet, what ease, what cure ?
Say, if thou know'st, speak, tell a wand'ring virgin.

PRO. All, thou canst wish to learn, I'll tell thee clearly,
Wrapt in no veil abstruse ; but in clear terms,
As friend to friend. Thine eyes behold Prometheus,
Whose warm benevolence gave fire to men.

IO. O thou, the common blessing of mankind,
Wretched Prometheus, wherefore are these sufferings ?

PRO. Scarce have I ceased lamenting my misfortunes.

IO. And wilt thou not allow me that sad office ?

PRO. Ask what thou wilt, thou shalt learn all from me.

IO. Say then, who bound thee in that rifted rock ?

PRO. The ruthless will of Jove, but Vulcan's hand.

IO. In what offending art thou chastened thus ?

PRO. Suffice it thee so much has been declared.

IO. Say then what time shall end my wretched wand'rings.

PRO. Better repose in ignorance, than know.

IO. Whate'er my woes to come, hide them not from me.

PRO. That favour unreluctant could I grant thee.

IO. Why this delay then to declare the whole ?

PRO. Ungrateful task to rend thy soul with anguish.

IO. Regard not me more than is pleasing to me.

PRO. Conjured thus strongly, I must speak. Hear then.

CHOR. Not yet ; this mournful pleasure let me share :

Let us first learn the story of her woes ;
Her lips will teach us each sad circumstance
Of misery past ; the future be thy task.

PRO. Vouchsafe t' indulge their wish ; they merit it ;
And are besides the sisters of thy father.
Nor light the recompense, when they, who hear,
Melt at the melancholy tale, and drop,
In pity drop, the sympathizing tear.

IO. Ill would excuse become me, or denial ;
Take then the plain unornamented tale

Ye wish to hear ; though sad the task enjoined,
And hard ; for how relate the heaven-sent tempest
That burst upon my head, my form thus changed
And all the weight of woe that overwhelms me ?
Still, when retired to rest, air-bodied forms
Visit my slumbers nightly, soothing me
With gentle speech, " Blest maid, why hoard for ever
Thy virgin treasure, when the highest nuptials
Await thy choice ; the flames of soft desire
Have touched the heart of Jove ; he burns with love :
Disdain not, gentle virgin, ah ! disdain not
The couch of Jove ; to Lerna's deep recess,
Where graze thy father's herds the meads along,
Go, gentle virgin, crown the god's desires."
The night returns, the visionary forms
Return again, and haunt my troubled soul,
Forbidding rest, till to my father's ear
I dared disclose the visions of the night.
To Pytho, to Dodona's vocal grove
He sent his seers, anxious to know what best
Was pleasing to the gods. Returned they bring
Dark-uttered answers of ambiguous sense.
At length one oracle distinct and plain
Pronounced its mandates, charging Inachus
To drive me from his house and from my country,
To rove at large o'er earth's extremest bounds :
Should he refuse, the vengeful bolt of Jove,
Winged with red flames, would all his race destroy.
Obedient to the Pythian god he drove me
Unwilling from his house, himself unwilling
Compelled by Jove, and harsh necessity.
Straight was my sense disordered, my fair form
Changed as you see, disfigured with these horns ;
And tortured with the bryze's horrid sting,

Wild with my pain with frantic speed I hurried
 To Cenchrea's vale with silver-winding streams
 Irriguous, and the fount whence Lerna spreads
 Its wide expanse of waters ; close behind
 In wrathful mood walked Argus, earth-born herdsman,
 With all his eyes observant of my steps.
 Him unawares a sudden fate deprived
 Of life ; whilst I, stung with that heaven-sent pest,
 Am driven with devious speed from land to land.
 Thou hast my tale. If aught of woes to come
 Thy prescient mind divines, relate them freely ;
 Nor through false pity with fallacious words
 Soothe my vain hopes, my soul abhors as base
 The fabling tongue of glozing courtesy.

CHOR. No more, no more, forbear. Ah never, never
 Conceived I that a tale so strange should reach
 My ears ; that miseries, woes, distresses, terrors,
 Dreadful to sight, intolerable to sense,
 Should shock me thus : woe, woe, unhappy fate !
 How my soul shudders at the fate of Io !

PRO. Already dost thou sigh, already tremble !
 Check these emotions till the whole is heard.

CHOR. Speak, show us : to the sick some gleam of
 comfort

Flows from the knowledge of their pains to come.

PRO. Your first request with ease has been obtained ;
 For from her lips you wished to hear the tale
 Of her afflictions. Hear the rest ; what woes
 From Juno's rage await this suff'ring virgin.
 And thou with deep attention mark my words,
 Daughter of Inachus ; and learn from them
 The traces of thy way. First then, from hence
 Turn to the orient sun, and pass the height
 Of these uncultured mountains ; thence descend

To where the wandering Scythians, trained to bear
The distant-wounding bow, on wheels aloft
Roll on their wattled cottages ; to these
Approach not nigh, but turn thy devious steps
Along the rough verge of the murm'ring main,
And pass the barb'rous country : on the left
The Chalybes inhabit, whose rude hands
Temper the glowing steel ; beware of these,
A savage and inhospitable race.
Thence shalt thou reach the banks of that proud stream,
Which from its roaring torrent takes its name ;
But pass it not, tempt not its dangerous depths
Unfordable, till now thy weary steps
Shall reach the distant bound of Caucasus,
Monarch of mountains ; from whose extreme height
The bursting flood rolls down his power of waters.
Passing those star-aspiring heights, descend
Where to the south the Amazonian tents,
Hostile to men, stretch o'er the plain ; whose troops
In after times shall near Thermodon's banks
Fix in Themiscyra's towers their martial rule,
Where Sálmydesia points her cruel rocks,
And glories in her wrecks : this female train
With courteous zeal shall guide thee in thy way.
Arriving where the dark Cimmerian lake
Spreads from its narrow mouth its vast expanse,
Leave it, and boldly plunge thy vent'rous foot
In the Mæotic straits ; the voice of fame
Shall eternize thy passage, and from thee
Call it the Bosphorus : there shalt thou quit
The shores of Europe, and intrepid reach
The continent of Asia—Seems he now,
This tyrant of the skies, seems he in all
Of fierce and headlong violence, when his love

Plunges a mortal in such deep distresses?
A rugged wooer, virgin, have thy charms
Won thee ; for be assured what I have told thee
Is but a prelude to the woes untold.

IO. Ah, miserable me !

PRO. Again that exclamation, that deep groan !
What wilt thou do, when thou shalt learn the rest ?

CHOR. Remains there aught of ills yet to be told ?

PRO. A wide tempestuous sea of baleful woes.

IO. What then has life desirable ? Why rather
From this rude cliff leap I not headlong down,
And end my woes ? Better to die at once,
Than linger out a length of life in pain.

PRO. Ill wouldst thou bear my miseries, by the Fates
Exempt from death, the refuge of th' afflicted.
But my afflictions know no bounds, till Jove
Falls from th' imperial sovereignty of heaven.

IO. Shall he then fall ? Shall the time come, when Jove
Shall sink dethroned ? I think I should rejoice
To see the tyrant's ruin. Should I not,
Since from his hands I suffer all these ills.

PRO. Then be thou well assured it shall be so.

IO. And who shall wrest th' imperial sceptre from him ?

PRO. Himself, destroyed by his improvident counsels.

IO. Oh say, if harmless what I ask, say how.

PRO. Urging a marriage he shall dearly rue.

IO. Heaven-sprung, or mortal ? If permitted, say.

PRO. What matters which ? It may not be disclosed.

IO. Shall then a wife deprive him of the throne ?

PRO. She greater than the sire shall bear a son.

IO. Has he no means of power t' avert this fate ?

PRO. None, till from these vile chains I shall be free.

IO. And who, 'gainst Jove's high will, shall set thee
free ?

PRO. One, of necessity, from thee descended.

IO. From me ! My son release thee from thy pains ?

PRO. Third of thy race, first numb'ring ten descents.

IO. Oracular this, of difficult conjecture.

PRO. Check then thy wish, nor seek to know thy toils.

IO. Do not hold forth a grace, then snatch it from me.

PRO. Of two relations I will grant thee either.

IO. Propose the two, then leave the choice to me.

PRO. Shall I declare the rest of thy misfortunes,
Or dost thou wish to know him that shall free me ?

CHOR. The first to her ; to me this other grace
Vouchsafe, nor my request treat with disdain.
To her impart what toils remain ; to me
Him that shall free thee ; this I most desire.

PRO. This your request I shall not be averse
To gratify, and tell you all you wish.
First for thy various wand'rings : Mark my words,
And grave them on the tablet of thy heart.
When thou shalt pass the flood, the common bound
Of either continent, direct thy steps
Right to the fiery portals of the east,
The sun's bright walk, along the roaring beach,
Till thou shalt come to the Gorgonian plains
Of Cisthine, where dwell the swan-like forms
Of Phorcys' daughters, bent and white with age ;
One common eye have these, one common tooth,
And never does the sun with cheerful ray
Visit them darkling, nor the moon's pale orb
That silvers o'er the night. The Gorgons nigh,
Their sisters these, spread their broad wings, and wreath
Their horrid hair with serpents, fiends abhorred,
Whom never mortal could behold, and live.
Be therefore warned, and let it profit thee
To learn what else detestable to sight

Lies in thy way, and dang'rous. Shun the Gryphins,
 Those dumb and rav'nous dogs of Jove. Avoid
 The Arimaspians troops, whose frowning foreheads
 Glare with one blazing eye ; along the banks,
 Where Pluto rolls his streams of gold, they rein
 Their foaming steeds ; approach them not, but seek
 A land far distant, where the tawny race
 Dwell near the fountains of the sun, and where
 The Nigris pours his dusky waters ; wind
 Along his banks, till thou shalt reach the fall
 Where from the mountains with Papyrus crowned
 The venerable Nile impetuous pours
 His headlong torrent ; he shall guide thy steps
 To those irriguous plains, whose triple sides
 His arms surround ; there have the Fates decreed
 Thee and thy sons to form the lengthened line.—
 Is aught imperfect, aught obscure ? Resume
 Th' inquiry, and be taught with greater clearness :
 I have more leisure than I wish to have.

CHOR. If thou hast aught remaining, aught omitted,
 'To tell her of her woeful wand'rings, speak it :
 If all has been declared, to us vouchsafe
 The grace we ask ; what, thou rememb'rest well.

PRO. Her wand'ring in full measure has she heard,
 That she may know she has not heard in vain,
 Her labours passed, ere these rude rocks she reached,
 Will I recite, good argument that truth
 Stamps my predictions sure : nor shall I use
 A length of words, but speak thy wand'rings briefly.
 Soon as thy foot reached the Molossian ground,
 And round Dodona's ridgy heights, where stands
 The seat oracular of Thesprotian Jove,
 And, wondrous prodigy, the vocal groves,
 These in clear, plain, unquestionable terms

Hailed thee "Illustrious wife of Jove that shall be,"
If that may soothe thy soul. The tort'ring sting
Thence drove thee wand'ring o'er the wave-washed strand
To the great gulf of Rhea, thence thy course
Through the vexed billows hither. But know this,
In after times shall that deep gulf from thee
Be call'd th' Ionian, and preserve to men
The memory of thy passage. This to thee,
Proving the prescience of my mind, that sees
More than appears: the rest to you and her,
Resuming my discourse, I speak in common.
On the land's extreme verge a city stands,
Canobus, proudly elevate, nigh where the Nile
Rolls to the sea his rich stream: there shall Jove
Heal thy distraction, and with gentle hand
Soothe thee to peace. Of his high race a son,
The dusky Epaphus, shall rise, and rule
The wide-extended land o'er which the Nile
Pours his broad waves. In the fifth line from him
Fifty fair sisters shall return to Argos
Unwillingly, to fly the kindred beds
Of fifty brothers; these with eager speed,
Swift as the falcon's flight when he pursues
The dove at hand, shall follow, nor obtain
The nuptials, which th' indignant gods deny.
These shall Pelasgia see by female hands
Welt'ring in gore, the night's convenient gloom
Fav'ring the daring deed; each female draws
The trenchant sword, and in her husband's blood
Stains the broad blade. Thus fatal to my foes
Be love! Yet one shall feel its softer flame
Melting her soul, and from the general carnage
Preserve her husband, choosing to be deemed
Of base degenerate spirit, rather than stain

Her gentle hands with blood. From her shall Argos
Receive a long imperial line of kings.

The full distinct relation would be tedious.

From her shall rise the hero, strong to wing

The dreaded shaft ; he from these tort'ring pains

Shall set me free : this my age-honoured mother,

Titanian Themis, with oracular voice

Foretold ; but when, or how, requires a length

Of narrative, which known would nought avail thee.

Io. Ah me ! ah wretched me ! That pang again !

Again that fiery pang, whose madd'ning smart

Corrodes and rankles in my breast ! With fear

My heart pants thick ; wildly my eyeballs roll ;

Distraction drives my hurried steps a length

Of weary wand'ring ; my ungoverned tongue

Utters tumultuous ravings, that roll high

The floods of passion swoln with horrid woes.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Was it not wisdom's sovereign power

That beamed her brightest, purest flame,

T' illume her sage's soul the thought to frame,

And clothe with words his heaven-taught lore ?

“ Whoe'er thou art, whom young desire

Shall lead to Hymen's holy fire,

Choose, from thy equals choose thy humble love :

Let not the pomp of wealth allure thine eye,

Nor high-traced lineage thy ambition move ;

Ill suits with low degree t' aspire so high.”

Antistrophe.

Never, oh never may my fate
 See me a splendid victim led
 To grace the mighty Jove's imperial bed,
 Or share a god's magnificent state.
 When Io's miseries meet my eyes,
 What horrors in my soul arise !
 Her virgin bosom, harb'ring high intent,
 In man delights not, and his love disdains ;
 Hence the dire pest by wrathful Juno sent,
 Her wide wild wand'rings hence, and agonizing pains.

Epode.

Me less ambitious thoughts engage,
 And love within my humbler sphere :
 Hence my soul rests in peace secure from fear,
 Secure from danger's threat'ning rage.
 Me may the powers that rule the sky
 Ne'er view with love's resistless eye :
 Ah ! never be th' unequal conflict mine,
 To strive with their inextricable love :
 Might not my heart against itself combine ?
 Or how escape the powerful arts of Jove ?

PRO. Yet shall this Jove, with all his self-willed pride,
 Learn humbler thoughts, taught by that fatal marriage,
 Which from the lofty throne of sovereign rule
 Shall sink him to a low and abject state,
 And on his head fulfil his father's curse,
 The curse of Saturn, vented in that hour
 When from his ancient royalty he fell.
 Of all the gods not one, myself except,
 Can warn him of his fate, and how to shun
 Th' impending ruin. I know all, and how.

Let him then sit, and glorying in his height
 Roll with his red right hand his volleyed thunder
 Falsely secure, and wreath his bick'ring flames.
 Yet nought shall they avail him, nor prevent
 His abject and dishonourable fall.
 Such rival adversary forms he now
 Against himself, prodigious in his might,
 And unassailable; whose rage shall roll
 Flames that surpass his lightnings, fiercer bolts
 That quash his thunders: and from Neptune's hand
 Dash his trined mace, that from the bottom stirs
 The troubled sea, and shakes the solid earth.
 Crushed with this dreadful ruin shall he learn
 How different, to command, and to obey.

CHOR. Thy ominous tongue gives utterance to thy wish.

PRO. It is my wish, and shall be ratified.

CHOR. What, shall high Jove bend to a greater lord?

PRO. And to a yoke more galling stoop his neck.

CHOR. Dost thou not fear, vaunting this bold discourse?

PRO. What should I fear, by Fate exempt from death?

CHOR. But he may add fresh tortures to thy pain.

PRO. Let him then add them, I await them all.

CHOR. Wise they, who reverence the stern power of vengeance.

PRO. Go then, with prompt servility fall down
 Before your lord, fawn, cringe, and sue for grace.
 For me, I value him at less than nothing.
 Let him exert his brief authority,
 And lord it whilst he may; his power in Heaven
 Shall vanish soon, nor leave a trace behind.—
 But see, his messenger hastes on amain,
 Th' obsequious lackey of this new-made monarch:
 He comes, I ween, the bearer of fresh tidings.

MERCURY, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

MERCURY. To thee grown old in craft, deep drenched in gall,
Disgustful to the gods, too prodigal
Of interdicted gifts to mortal man,
Thief of the fire of Heaven, to thee my message.
My father bids thee say what nuptials these
Thy tongue thus vaunts as threat'ning his high power ;
And clearly say, couched in no riddling phrase,
Each several circumstance ; propound not to me
Ambiguous terms, Prometheus ; for thou seest
Jove brooks not such, unfit to win his favour.

PRO. Thou doest thy message proudly, in high terms,
Becoming well the servant of such lords.
Your youthful power is new ; yet vainly deem ye
Your high-raised towers impregnable to pain :
Have I not seen two sovereigns of the sky
Sink from their glorious state ? And I shall see
A third, this present lord, with sudden ruin
Dishonourably fall. What, seem I now
To dread, to tremble at these new-raised gods ?
That never shall their force extort from me.
Hence then, the way thou cam'st return with speed :
Thy vain inquiries get no other answer.

MER. Such insolence before, so fiery fierce,
Drew on thy head this dreadful punishment.

PRO. My miseries, be assured, I would not change
For thy gay servitude, but rather choose
To live a vassal to this dreary rock,
Than lackey the proud heels of Jove. These words,
If insolent, your insolence extorts.

MER. I think thou art delighted with thy woes.

PRO. Delighted ! Might I see mine enemies
Delighted thus ! And thee I hold among them.

MER. And why blame me for thy calamities?

PRO. To tell thee in a word, I hate them all,
These gods ; of them I deserved well, and they
Ungrateful and unjust work me these ills.

MER. Thy malady, I find, is no small madness.

PRO. If to detest my enemies be madness,
It is a malady I wish to have.

MER. Were it well with thee, who could brook thy
pride?

PRO. Ah me !

MER. That sound of grief Jove doth not know.

PRO. Time, as its age advanceth, teaches all things.

MER. All its advances have not taught thee wisdom.

PRO. I should not else waste words on thee, a vassal.

MER. Nought wilt thou answer then to what Jove
asks.

PRO. If due, I would repay his courtesy.

MER. Why am I checked, why rated as a boy?

PRO. A boy thou art, more simple than a boy,
If thou hast hopes to be informed by me.
Not all his tortures, all his arts shall move me
T' unlock my lips, till this cursed chain be loosed.
No, let him hurl his flaming lightnings, wing
His whitening snows, and with his thunders shake
The rocking earth, they move not me to say
What force shall wrest the sceptre from his hand.

MER. Weigh these things well, will these unloose thy
chains?

PRO. Well have they long been weighed, and well con-
sidered.

MER. Subdue, vain fool, subdue thy insolence,
And let thy miseries teach thee juster thoughts.

PRO. Thy counsels, like the waves that dash against
The rock's firm base, disquiet but not move me,

Conceive not of me that, through fear what Jove
May in his rage inflict, my fixed disdain
Shall e'er relent, e'er suffer my firm mind
To sink to womanish softness, to fall prostrate,
To stretch my supplicating hands, entreating
My hated foe to free me from these chains.
Far be that shame, that abject weakness from me.

MER. I see thou art implacable, unsoftened
By all the mild entreaties I can urge ;
But like a young steed reined, that proudly struggles,
And champs his iron curb, thy haughty soul
Abates not of its unavailing fierceness.
But pride, disdaining to be ruled by reason,
Sinks weak and valueless. But mark me well,
If not obedient to my words, a storm,
A fiery and inevitable deluge
Shall burst in threefold vengeance on thy head.
First, his fierce thunder winged with lightning flames
Shall rend this rugged rock, and cover thee
With hideous ruin : long time shalt thou lie
Astonied in its rifted sides, till dragged
Again to light ; then shall the bird of Jove,
The rav'ning eagle, lured with scent of blood,
Mangle thy body, and each day returning,
An uninvited guest, plunge his fell beak,
And feast and riot on thy black'ning liver.
Expect no pause, no respite, till some god
Comes to relieve thy pains, willing to pass
The dreary realms of ever-during night,
The dark descent of Tartarus profound.
Weigh these things well ; this is no fiction drest
In vaunting terms, but words of serious truth.
The mouth of Jove knows not to utter falsehood,
But what he speaks is fate. Be cautious then,

Regard thyself ; let not o'erweening pride
Despise the friendly voice of prudent counsel.

CHOR. Nothing amiss we deem his words, but fraught
With reason, who but wills thee to relax
Thy haughty spirit, and by prudent counsels
Pursue thy peace : be then advised ; what shame
For one so wise to persevere in error !

PRO. All this I knew ere he declared his message.
That enemy from enemy should suffer
Extreme indignity is nothing strange.
Let him then work his horrible pleasure on me ;
Wreathe his black curling flames, tempest the air
With volleyed thunders and wild warring winds,
Rend from its roots the firm earth's solid base,
Heave from the roaring main its boisterous waves,
And dash them to the stars ; me let him hurl,
Caught in the fiery tempest, to the gloom
Of deepest 'Tartarus ; not all his power
Can quench th' ethereal breath of life in me.

MER. Such ravings, such wild counsels might you hear,
From moon-struck madness. What is this but madness ?
Were he at ease, would he abate his frenzy ?
But you, whose gentle hearts with social sorrow
Melt at his suff'rings, from this place remove,
Remove with speed, lest the tempestuous roar
Of his fierce thunder strike your souls with horror.

CHOR. To other themes, to other counsels turn
Thy voice, where pleaded reason may prevail :
This is ill urged, and may not be admitted.
Wouldst thou solicit me to deeds of baseness ?
Whate'er betides, with him will I endure it.
The vile betrayer I have learned to hate ;
There is no fouler stain, my soul abhors it.

MER. Remember you are warned ; if ill o'ertake you

Accuse not Fortune, lay not the blame on Jove,
As by his hand sunk in calamities
Unthought of, unforeseen : no, let the blame
Light on yourselves ; your folly not unwarned,
Not unawares, but 'gainst your better knowledge,
Involved you in th' inextricable toils.

PRO. He fables not ; I feel in very deed
The firm earth rock ; the thunder's deep'ning roar
Rolls with redoubled rage ; the bick'ring flames
Flash thick ; the eddying sands are whirled on high ;
In dreadful opposition the wild winds
Rend the vexed air ; the boist'rous billows rise
Confounding sea and sky ; th' impetuous storm
Rolls all its terrible fury on my head.
Seest thou this, awful Themis ; and thou, Æther,
Through whose pure azure floats the general stream
Of liquid light, see you what wrongs I suffer !

THE SUPPLICANTS.

THE fire and fury that rages through the former play is agreeably contrasted, where perhaps the reader least expected it, with the sober spirit of the daughters of Danaus. These illustrious Supplicants are drawn indeed with a firmness of soul becoming their high rank, but tempered with a modest and amiable sensibility, and an interesting plaintiveness, that might have been a model even to the gentle and passionate Ovid, and that heart must have little of the fine feelings of humanity that does not sympathize with their distress. The provident wisdom of their father Danaus, the calm but firm dignity of Pelagus, the inviolable attachment to the laws of hospitality, the solemn sense of religion and the chasteness of sentiment through the whole, must please every mind that is capable of being touched with the gracious simplicity of ancient manners.

The scene is near the shore, in an open grove close to the altar and images of the gods presiding over the sacred games, with a view of the sea and the ships of Ægyptus on one side, and of the towers of Argos on the other; with hills, and woods, and vales, a river flowing between them; altogether with the persons of the drama forming a picture

that would have well employed the united pencils of Poussin and Claude Lorraine.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CHORUS, THE DAUGHTERS
OF DANAUS,
DANAUS.

PELASGUS.
HERALD.

CHORUS. Protector of the suppliant, gracious Jove,
Look with an eye of pity on this strain,
Which from the gentle depths of Nile have sped
Their naval enterprise. Those sacred fields,
That border on the Syrian wastes, we leave,
Not by the public voice of justice doomed
For blood, but willing fugitives from youths
Too near allied, whose impious love would raise
Perforce the nuptial bed by us abhorred ;
Sons of Ægyptus they. Our father Danaus,
On whose authority we build our counsels,
And strengthen our abhorrence, planned these measures,
And wrought us to this honourable toil,
To wing our swift flight o'er the billowy main,
And reach the shores of Argos, whence we draw
Our vaunted lineage, from the embrace of Jove
Enamoured of that virgin, whom transformed
The tort'ring sting drove wand'ring o'er the world.
To what more friendly region can we take
Our progress, bearing in our suppliant hands
These peaceful branches crowned with sacred wreaths ?
Ye royal towers, thou earth, and ye fair streams
Of orient crystal, ye immortal gods
In the high heavens enthroned, ye awful powers
That deep beneath hold your tremendous seats,
Jove the preserver, guardian of the roof

Where dwells the pious man, receive your suppliants,
Breathe o'er these realms your favourable spirit,
And form them to receive this female train !
But for those men, that proud injurious band
Sprung from Ægyptus, ere they fix their foot
On this moist shore, drive them into the deep,
With all their flying streamers and quick oars,
There let them meet the whirlwind's boist'rous rage,
Thund'rings, and lightnings, and the furious blasts
That harrow up the wild tempestuous waves,
And perish in the storm, ere they ascend
Our kindred bed, and seize against our will
What nature and the laws of blood deny.

To thee, th' avenging power
Adored beyond the waves of this wide main,
Raise we the solemn strain,
Her progeny, that cropped each various flower
Which decked the fragrant mead,
Till Jove's soft touch her altered shape caressed,
And soothed her soul to rest :
Thereto we add thy fate-appointed name,
Epaphus of mighty fame,
To thee we raise the strain, while now we tread
Thy revered mother's fertile soil,
And record each various toil ;
Now shall each trace to light be brought,
Though far surpassing human thought ;
Now shall the wondrous tale unfold,
Mysterious deeds of times of old.
Dwells in this land some augur near ?
If these sad wailings reach his ear,
Will he not deem the mournful note
Warbled from Philomela's throat,

Such time as from the falcon's wing
She leaves her fav'rite haunt and spring,
And o'er her nest, and o'er her young
Attunes her sweetest, saddest song,
And in the melancholy strain
Laments the fate of Itys slain ;
In sullen rage the mother stands,
And in her son's blood bathes her hands.
In notes so sweet, so sad, I try
To raise th' Ionian harmony ;
And rend these cheeks, that ripening drew
On Nile's warm banks their vermeil hue ;
Whilst at each solemn, pensive pause
My bursting heart the deep sigh draws,
And, woe-betrothed, fears e'en its friends,
If yet perchance one friend attends,
For that our sails the deep explore,
Leaving our native dusky shore.

Ye gods, from whom we proudly trace
The glories of our high-born race,
Hear us, ye powers, propitious hear,
And show that justice is your care ;
Guard in our just, our holy cause
The sanctity of Nature's laws ;
You, that abhor each impious deed,
Arise, protect the nuptial bed.
When Mars to slaughter gives the reins,
And rages o'er th' ensanguined plains,
To each that flies the altar gives
A refuge, and the suppliant lives,
For Jove, with pious prayers adored,
Commands stern war to drop the sword.

Jove's firm decree, though wrapt in night,
Beams 'midst the gloom a constant light ;

Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,
Not to be pierced by mortal eyes ;
The just resolves of his high mind
A glorious consummation find ;
Though in majestic state enthroned
Thick clouds and dark enclose him round
As from the tower of heaven his eye
Surveys bold man's impiety ;
Till, his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,
He arms each god for punishment,
And from his high and holy throne
Sends all his awful judgments down.
And may his eye our wrongs survey,
Marked by insulting man his prey ;
As each bold youth by passion fired
Against our bosom-peace conspired,
And to deceit's smooth influence
Joined rude and boist'rous violence :
An infant forest these, that shoot
Their wild growth from one parent root,
And o'er our fresh bloom strive to spread
Their cheerless and malignant shade.
Thus I attune my notes of woe,
And bid the varied measures flow ;
Now the shrilling descant chase,
Now solemn sink the deep'ning bass ;
Thus bid the warbled cadence 'plain,
And steep in tears the mournful strain ;
A strain to grace my obsequies,
Whilst yet I view yon golden skies.

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,
Where Apis reigned in years of yore,
Propitious hear me, nor disdain
To let your echoes learn this strain ;

Barbaric though my voice and rude,
Well may its notes be understood ;
Barbaric though this purpled stole,
Frowned around with linen roll,
This blushing veil though Sidon gave,
Ye hills of Apis hear, and save !

The vow performed the gods atoned,
The pious rites with blessings crowned,
Death distant waits with slackened pace,
Nor dares profane the sacred place.
But will he now his foot repress ?
Will the kind gods their votary bless ?
Ah me ! these swelling waves of woe,
Whither, ah ! whither will they flow ?

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,
Where Apis reigned in years of yore,
Propitious hear me, nor disdain
To let your echoes learn this strain ;
Barbaric though my voice and rude,
Well may its notes be understood ;
Barbaric though this purpled stole,
Frowned around with linen roll :
This blushing veil though Sidon gave,
Ye hills of Apis hear, and save !

The dashing oar, the swelling sail,
That caught the favourable gale,
Safe from the storms, nor I complain,
Wafted our frail bark o'er the main.
All-seeing sovereign Sire, defend,
And guide us to a prosp'rous end ;
Save us, O save the seed divine
Of our great mother's sacred line ;
From man's rude touch O save us free,
And help insnared chastity !

Thou, virgin daughter of high Jove,
A virgin's vows hear, and approve ;
Holding thy sober, awful state,
Protect us from the touch we hate ;
From bold incontinence secure,
Pure thyself, preserve us pure ;
Save us, O save the seed divine
Of our great mother's sacred line ;
From man's rude touch O save us free,
And help insnared chastity !

If not, this glowing train, that trace
From Heaven's high King their high-born race,
Shall voluntary victims go
To th' all-receiving realms below ;
To their dread gods for refuge fly,
If Heaven's high powers their aid deny.

O sovereign Jove, shall wrath divine
For Iö still pursue her line ?
Still thy dread queen in fury rise,
And in her cause arm all the skies ?
She wings these winds, this tempest spreads,
That bursts in vengeance o'er our heads.
O sovereign Jove, for this thy ear
No meed of grateful voice shall hear ;
Thy son dishonoured, whom of yore
To thee disfigured Iö bore.
Turn then, O turn thy gracious eye,
And hear us from thy throne on high !

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. Daughters, this hour demands your utmost
prudence ;

Your father's care, your old and faithful pilot,
Hath held your helm safe o'er the dangerous deep ;
Behoves you now at land with provident heed
To form your counsels, and attentive mark
My words. Yon cloud of dust, though tongueless, speaks
An army nigh ; I hear their wheels of brass
Loud rattling on their axles ; now I view
Chariots and horse distinct, and shields, and spears
Far gleaming o'er the plain ; the lords perchance
That rule these realms, informed of our arrival,
Advance to us ; but bring they minds of peace,
Guiltless of violence, or with ruthless rage
Rush on this train, best sit together, virgins,
Around this altar, sacred to the gods.
Presiding o'er the games : a surer refuge
Than tower or shield war-proof an altar gives.
Go then with speed, and reverent in your hands
Hold forth these supplicating branches crowned
With snowy wreaths, ensigns of awful Jove.
With modest, grave, and decent speech receive
These strangers, as beseems the wretched state
Of unknown supplicants ; declare at once
Distinct and brief the motives of your flight
Unstained with blood : let not your roving eye
Dart the bold glance, impeaching modesty.
Be not thy voice heard first, nor let its answers
Weary their ear ; they quickly take offence ;
Submissive urge thy plea, rememb'ring well
The pride of words ill suits thy low estate,
A fugitive, a stranger, in distress.

CHOR. Wise are thy counsels, and with reverend heed
Shall be remembered, father ; and may Jove,
The author of our race, look gracious on us.

DAN. Quick be his aid, strong guardian of our cause.

CHOR. Thus near I choose my seat.

DAN. Supreme of gods,
Pity our suff'rings, pity ere we perish.

CHOR. Look with an eye of mercy on thy suppliants,
Impart thy grace, and bless us with success.

DAN. Address you now this crested bird of Jove.

CHOR. Thee, radiant Sun, thy tutelary rays
Streaming with gold, sacred Apollo, god
Once exiled from the skies, to thee I call,
Look on our woes, and pity wretched mortals.

DAN. O succour us, assist us, gracious power.

CHOR. Whom of these gods, whom yet shall we invoke?

DAN. Mark you this trident? It declares the god.

CHOR. Safe hast thou brought us o'er the swelling sea,
Receive us then, and save us on the shore.

DAN. This, in the Grecian rites, is Mercury.

CHOR. Nothing but good announce thou to the free.

DAN. This common altar, sacred to these gods,
Approach with awe ; the ground is holy ; sit
Like turtles trembling at the falcon's flight,
The winged foe of all the winged race,
Polluter of his kind ; for how can bird,
That preys on bird, be pure? Or how can man,
That from th' unwilling father drags to marriage
Th' unwilling daughter, how can he be chaste?
Or shall the haughty deed e'en after death
Escape unpunished in the realms below?
No : for another Jove, they say, holds there
His awful seat, and to the guilty dead
Awards just vengeance. But be wary, try

The sanctity of the place ; and may it bring
The blessing of success to crown your hopes.

PELASGUS, DANAUS, CHORUS.

PELASGUS. What female train address we here, and
Gorgeously vested in barbaric stoles [whence,
That float in many a fold ? Our Argos sees not
Her daughters thus arrayed ; nor Greece through all
Its States. That thus without some previous herald,
The public hospitality not asked,
Without safe conduct, you have boldly ventured
To land upon our coasts, this is most strange.
Only these boughs, as supplicants are wont,
You lay before these gods that o'er the games
Preside : hence Greece forms one conjecture only,
Of all besides uncertain what to think,
Till your distinct relation clears our doubts.

CHOR. As to our habits, thy remarks are just.
But how should I address thee ? as a man
Of private station, or with hallowed charge
Presiding here, or chieftain of the State ?

PEL. Nay, answer me, and speak with confidence.
Pelagus bids you, sovereign of this land :
My sire Palæcthon, of high ancestry
Original with this earth : from me, their king,
The people take their name, and boast themselves
Pelagians. O'er a wide extent of land,
Through which the Algeus flows, and Strymon west,
From the Perrhæbians o'er the sacred heights
Of Pindus, to Pœonia, and beyond
The mountains of Dodona, spacious realms,
My empire stretches, bounded by the sea
This way. In ancient times the Apian plains
From Apis drew their honoured name, the son

Of Phoebus, in his father's healing arts
Skilled : from Naupactus came the heaven-taught sage
And cleared the land of that pestiferous brood,
Which the moist earth, foul with corrupted gore,
Of old engendered, fierce with dragon-rage,
A cruel neighbourhood ; their horrible pride
The matchless Apis quelled, and freed the land
Of Argos. Hence in sacred reverence
We hold his memory. Instructed thus
Say on, declare your race, and aught besides :
But know we brook not the long pomp of words.

CHOR. Brief will I be, and plain. Of Argive race
We boast ourselves, and draw our vaunted lineage
From her, the lowing mother, in her son
Supremely blest. All this my words shall prove.

PEL. Unplausible your tale. Can it be, strangers,
'That you're of Argive race? Liker, I ween,
The Libyan damsels, in no wise resembling
Our daughters : such perchance the Nile might rear,
Such in the glowing tint the artist's hand
Might mark the Colchian dame ; and such, I hear,
The wand'ring Indians, mounted on their camels,
Along the tented plains out-stretching wide
To Æthiopia's cities ; such the troops
Of warlike Amazons ; and were your hands
Armed with the polished bow, I might conjecture
You were of these ; therefore I thirst to know
More fully, how you are of Argive race.

CHOR. Fame speaks of Iō, in this Argive land
The sacred guardian of the fane of Juno.
Her, as the common voice loudly reports——

PEL. Reports it that the Thunderer, of her charms
Enamoured, with a mortal mixed the god ?

CHOR. And met in secret shades, concealed from Juno.

PEL. How ended then the bickerings of these powers?

CHOR. The Argive queen transformed her to a heifer.

PEL. Does Jove approach her in this fair-horned shape?

CHOR. Himself, they say, transforming to a bull.

PEL. What angry measures formed his royal consort?

CHOR. A herdsman she assigned starred round with eyes.

FEL. What herdsman this, and how starred round with eyes?

CHOR. The earth-born Argus : but him Hermes slew.

PEL. What new device to vex the wretched heifer?

CHOR. A winged pest, armed with a horrid sting :

Those on the banks of Nile call it the bryze.

PEL. And drove her in long wand'rings from this land.

CHOR. Thy words, according well, speak this for me.

PEL. Reached she Canobus, and the walls of Memphis?

CHOR. There Jove with gentle hand soothed her to rest ;
There planted his illustrious progeny.

PEL. Who from this heifer boasts his race divine?

CHOR. Hence Epaphus received his name ; from him
Libya, whose fair domains extended wide.

PEL. What other branch sprung from this mighty root?

CHOR. Belus, the father of two sons ; my sire,
Behold, is one.

PEL. Declare the sage's name.

CHOR. Danaus : his brother whom by name they call
Ægyptus, is the sire of fifty sons.

Thus have I shown thee our high ancestry ;

Protect us then, support an Argive train.

PEL. You seem indeed to draw your origin
Of old from hence : but say, how have you dared
To leave your father's house? What chance constrained
you?

CHOR. King of Pelasgia, various are the ills
Of mortal man ; and never mayst thou see

Misfortune mounting on the self-same wing.
Who would have thought we should have winged our flight
Thus unexpected to the coast of Argos
Allied of old, amazement in our van,
And strong abhorrence of the nuptial bed !

PEL. Why, sayest thou, fly you to these gods for refuge,
Holding these fresh-cropt branches crowned with wreaths ?

CHOR. That to the offspring of Ægyptus we
Might not be slaves.

PEL. Whence this reluctance, say,
From hate ? Or do your laws forbid such nuptials ?

CHOR. And who would wish to make their friends their
lords ?

PEL. Yet thus the strength of families gains force.

CHOR. And to the wretched, death is not unwelcome.

PEL. In what would you engage my honour to you ?

CHOR. Not to enthrall us to Ægyptus' sons,
Should they demand us.

PEL. Arduous is the task
Thou wouldst enjoin me, to provoke new wars.

CHOR. O'er him that succours, Justice holds her shield.

PEL. If from the first the cause were my concern.

CHOR. Revere these gods, the guardians of your State,
Encircled with this supplicating train.

PEL. Struck with religious horror I behold
These branches shade this consecrated seat.

CHOR. Dread then the wrath of Jove, who guards the
suppliant.

Son of Palæcthon, hear me ; with a heart
Prompt to relieve, King of Pelasgia, hear.
Behold me suppliant, an exile, wand'ring,
Like the poor lamb, that on the craggy steep
Raises her mournful voice, secure of help,
And warns her faithful keeper of her danger.

PEL. I see a stranger train, with boughs new-plucked
Shading these gods that o'er the games preside.
May their arrival, though now strangers here,
Yet hence descended, bring no dread event ;
Nor from this sudden, unexpected hap
Let war, which least we wish, disturb our State.

CHOR. May Themis, guardian of the suppliant, sprung
From powerful Jove, look on our harmless flight.
Nor from a younger let thy age disdain
To learn the reverence due to supplicants,
From whose pure hands the fav'ring gods accept
The grateful offering.

PEL. Make not your request
To me in private ; if pollution stains
The public State, the public has the charge
To expiate that stain ; nor can my voice,
Ere consultation with the people held,
Warrant the sanction of the public faith.

CHOR. Thou art the State ; the public thou ; thy
voice,
Superior to control, confirms the sanction
This altar gives ; thy sole authority,
High-sceptred monarch of a sovereign throne,
Is here obeyed : religion's voice pleads for us ;
Revere it, nor profane these hallowed seats.

PEL. That profanation to mine enemies.
To grant you my protection cannot be
But with much danger ; to reject your prayers
Humanity forbids : perplexed I fear
To act, or not to act, and fix my choice.

CHOR. On Heaven's high throne he sits, whose watchful
eye
Regards th' afflicted, when unfeeling pride
Denies that justice which the law asks for them.

Reverence his power ; for when the sufferer groans
With pangs unpitied, the fixed wrath of Jove,
Protector of the suppliant, burns severe.

PEL. If by your country's laws *Ægyptus'* sons,
As next of blood, assert a right in you,
Who should oppose them? It behoves thee then
By your own laws to prove such claim unjust.

CHOR. Ah! never may I be perforce a thrall
To man! By heaven-directed flight I break
The wayward plan of these detested nuptials.
Arm justice on thy side, and with her aid
Judge with that sanctity the gods demand.

PEL. No easy province : make not me your judge.
Great though my power, it is not mine to act,
I told thee so, without my people's voice
Assenting ; lest, if ill arise, they say
By honouring strangers thou hast undone thy country.

CHOR. Each equally allied, impartial Jove
Weighs each in equal balance ; but repays
The impious deed with vengeance, to the just
Rewards their sanctity. Why griev'st thou then
To emulate the god, and act with justice ?

PEL. Matter of high import hast thou proposed,
Which not admits heady and fitful rashness,
But deep deliberation, provident care,
Wisely attentive to the general weal,
That hence no evil rise, but the event,
Be prosp'rous found, first to the State and me ;
Next, that no force arrest you here, nor we
Betray you refuged in these hallowed seats,
The hostages of Heaven, and on our heads
Call ruin and the vengeance of the gods
That e'en in death acquits not. Seems not this
Matter of deep debate, and public care?

CHOR. Deliberate then with prudent care :

To thy counsels take with thee
Heaven-commercing piety,
And be steadfast justice near.

Hark ! methinks I hear them say,
Do not, mighty king, betray
Wretched exiles wand'ring far.

See me not with ruffian hand,
Refuged at this shrine, profaned,
Learn what boist'rous man may dare.

See me not with ruffled vest
Rent unseemly from my breast,
Loose my tresses waving round,
Bridled with this golden brede,
Led, like a reluctant steed,
From the gods that guard this ground.

See each hallowed image here,
And the awful powers revere :
At thy feet thy suppliant laid,
Mighty monarch, hear and aid !

And know, to thee, thy house, thy rising race
Impartial justice shall repay the deed ;
With glory's radiant crown thy virtues grace,
And righteous Jove shall sanctify the meed.

PEL. Well ; I have paused, and pondered ; but each
thought

Tells me the fluctuating tide perforce
Will drive me on a war with these, or those :
And, like a ship with all its anchors out,
I must abide the storm : nor will this end
Without calamity, and loss, and woe.
When the rich house in desolation sinks,
Its wealth all wasted, bounteous Jove may raise
Its splendour to outshine its former state :

Or when the haughty tongue unseemly bolts
The bitter taunt that stings the anguished heart,
The balm of honied words may heal the wound.
But kindred blood to reek upon the dust—
No : let the altars blaze, and each due rite
Propitiate ev'ry god t' avert the ill.
Meanwhile I keep aloof, wishing t' appear
Ignorant of these disputes : and may th' event
Be fortunate beyond my expectation.

CHOR. Hear the last words of desperate modesty.

PEL. Have I not heard ? Speak on, I will attend.

CHOR. Seest thou these braided zones that bind our robes ?

PEL. Ornaments these that suit your female state.

CHOR. Know then the honest purpose these shall serve.

PEL. What would thy words intend ? Explain thyself.

CHOR. If honour shall not guard this female train——

PEL. How can these binding zones secure your safety ?

CHOR. Hanging new trophies on these images.

PEL. Mysterious are thy words ; speak plainly to me.

CHOR. To tell thee plainly then, I mean ourselves.

PEL. I hear the language of an anguished heart.

CHOR. Be sure of that : I speak our firm resolves.

PEL. On ev'ry side inevitable ills

Surround me, like a flood, whose dang'rous surge

Drives me into a vast and gulfy sea,

Where no kind harbour shelters from the storm.

Should I not yield you refuge, thou hast named

A deed of horror not to be surpassed :

If with Ægyptus' sons, whose veins are rich

With kindred blood, before our walls I try

The chance of war, what else but bitter loss

Can be th' event, when in a woman's cause

Men shed their warm blood on th' embattled plain ?

Yet strong constraint compels me to revere

The wrath of Jove, whose hospitable power
Protects the suppliant, awfully severe.
And thou, age-honoured father of these virgins,
Take in thy hands these boughs, place them with speed
On other altars of our country gods ;
That all the citizens may see the signs
Of your arrival ; but of me be sure
Speak not a word : for this free people love
To tax authority with blame. Some eye
Perchance may melt with pity, and abhor
The boist'rous force of these injurious men ;
Hence shall you find more favour from the people ;
For nature prompts to succour the distressed.

DAN. This reverend, this benevolent regard
To strangers we receive with grateful honour.
But from thy train send with me some t' attend,
To guide me to the altars of your gods,
The guardians of your State, and to their shrines,
With safety through your streets ; for much unlike
Our form, our garb to yours ; nor does our Nile
See on its banks a race like those that tread
The verdant borders of your Inachus :
Hence insolence may dare the rude affront ;
The stranger friend by the friend's hand has bled.

PEL. Attend him ; he says well ; conduct his steps
Safe to the sacred shrines, seats of the gods,
Within our walls ; and, as you pass, avoid
Much talk with those you meet, guiding this stranger,
Who claims protection from our hallowed altars.

PELASGUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS. For him thou hast ordered well ; safe may he go
Appointed thus : but what becomes of me ?
What shall I do ? How wilt thou calm my fears ?

PEL. Leave here those boughs, the ensigns of your toils.

CHOR. I leave them as thy voice and hand directs.

PEL. Seest thou that unfenced grove? Take shelter there.

CHOR. How should th' unconsecrated grove protect me?

PEL. Let them have wings, we leave you not their prey.

CHOR. Than winged dragons they're more dreadful to us.

PEL. With better omens be thy words auspicious.

CHOR. No marvel if my mind sinks with its fears.

PEL. But a king's fear is ominous of ill.

CHOR. Be all thy words, be all thy actions happy!

PEL. Your father will not long be absent from you;
 Meanwhile will I persuade th' assembled people,
 If haply I may move them, to receive you
 With generous pity: him will I instruct
 How best t' address his speech. Await th' event,
 And supplicate the gods, whose guardian power
 Is worshipped here, to grant your hearts' warm wish.
 This done, I will return; and may persuasion
 Attend me, and good fortune speed my steps.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Might of the mighty, king of kings,
 Supremely blest amidst the blest above,
 Enthroned in glory righteous Jove,
 From whom perfection to the perfect springs,
 Hear us, O hear our fond request,
 To pity melt each generous breast;
 View this bold outrage with indignant eye,
 And shield us from the injury:
 O'ertake their proud barque on the purple main,
 Sink it with all its sable train;
 Our female band with pity view, [drew.
 And think from whose rich blood our honoured race we

Antistrophe 1.

If Argive Iö's blooming grace
 Could e'er thy fond enamoured bosom move
 To warm desire, and rapturous love,
 The pleasing memory of her charms retrace.
 From her our race divine we boast,
 Not foreign to this Argive coast.
 Her foot, in times of old, where now we tread,
 Trod the flower-enamelled mead ;
 And made with lowings loud the forests ring,
 As from the bryze's tort'ring sting
 O'er many a realm she wandered wide,
 And dared the bounding waves, that world from world divide.

Strophe 2.

Found her foot rest on Asia's shore,
 On pastoral Phrygia's, or on Lydia's plains.
 Or Mysian Teuthra's wide domains ?
 Wildly Cicilia's rugged mountains o'er,
 Pamphylia's various tribes among,
 Each ceaseless-flowing stream along,
 Through corn-clad fields, and valleys ever green,
 The hallowed haunts of beauty's queen,
 That winged pest impelled her foot to rove,
 To the divine, all fost'ring grove,
 Through whose rich meads, impregn'd with snow
 Tempered with torrid beams Nile's healthful waters flow.

Antistrophe 2.

The race that then possessed the land,
 Struck with astonishment and pale affright,
 Beheld the strange, prodigious sight :
 Disdaining to be touched she trod the strand,

The likeness of the lowing race
 Now soft'ning sweet to virgin grace
 They saw, and trembled. All her toils at last,
 Her wand'rings wild, her tortures past,
 What gentle hand—eternal Lord 'twas thine;
 Thy gentle hand, thy power divine
 Soothed, softly soothed her frantic fear,
 And from her glowing cheek wiped sorrow's modest tear.

Epode.

Now thy pleasing force employ,
 All be love, and all be joy.
 Rising from the sweet embrace,
 Worthy of his radiant race,
 Smiles the auspicious boy.
 Time prepares to stamp his name
 Glorious in the roll of fame;
 Earth, through ev'ry raptured scene,
 Hails th' ethereal son of Jove.
 Who could charm Heaven's angry queen?
 Who her hostile hate remove?
 This the deed of Jove alone,
 And this his genuine son.
 To whom, for justice when I raise the strain,
 To whom, save Jove, should I complain?
 Great, awful author of our ancient line,
 Creative parent, independent lord,
 Disposer of the world, righteous, benign,
 Sovereign, above the highest high adored;
 Whene'er he deigns to grace some favoured head,
 Easy alike to him the will, the word, the deed.

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. Be of good courage, daughters ; a decree,
Such as you wish, this generous State has passed.

CHOR. Dear to my soul, with grateful tidings fraught,
Hail, reverend parent ! But inform us how
Passed the decree ; what numbers favoured us ?

DAN. Not one discordant voice jarred in their counsels.
The fire of youth glowed in these aged veins,
When the whole people their uplifted hands
Waved in the air, to witness their assent
That we might be permitted here to dwell
Free, unreclaimable, inviolate :
That none presume, native or stranger, hence
To lead us ; and should force be used, whoever
Assists not, him the public sentence drives,
With infamy, an exile from his country.
This the Pelasgian king advised, to us
Benevolent, declaring the fierce wrath
Of Jove, protector of the suppliant,
Could not permit this firm and prosp'rous State
To flourish ; but such double insult, offered
To ev'ry law of hospitality
Sacred and civil, would with twofold vengeance
Draw ruin on it. When the Argives heard
These arguments of winning eloquence,
Impatient of the usual forms, they gave
With hands uplifted their concordant suffrage
Friendly to us : thus Jove decreed th' event.

CHOR. Come then, my sisters, for these pious Argives
Breathe we some pious prayer, whose solemn strain
May reach the ear of Jove. And thou, supreme,
God of the stranger, hear a stranger's voice
Sincere, unblamed ; and ratify our vows !

Strophe.

Ye progeny of Jove, whose awful power
 In yon ethereal plain
 Fixes the glories of your reign,
 Bend from your radiant seats your ear,
 Attentive to a virgin's prayer,
 And on this generous race your choicest blessings shower.
 Never may war, whose wanton rage
 The thundering falchion joys to wield,
 Joys, when embattled hosts engage,
 To mow with ruthless arm the field ;
 Never with rude discordant roar
 Affright the echoes of this shore ;
 Never with hostile hand
 Wave round these glittering towers the blazing brand.
 Soft-eyed humanity dwells here,
 That melting to the suppliant's tear
 Asserts our hopeless cause ;
 And spotless piety, whose breast
 Submiss reveres Jove's high behest,
 And hospitable laws.
 Your sacred spirit inspires the free
 To form the generous, bold decree,
 And man's rude force disdain ;
 To cast on Heaven's dread Lord their eye,
 The terrors of his vengeance fly,
 Nor scorn our female train :
 He o'er the impious roof his thunders rolls,
 And awful in his wrath appals the guilty souls.

Antistrophe.

Our kindred train, suppliants of holy Jove,
 Pelasgia's sons revere,
 And make our wrongs their generous care.

For this at every hallowed shrine
 Propitious be each power divine ;
 For this beneath this solemn-shaded grove
 Our raptured invocations rise,
 And Heaven shall hear the pious strains.
 Ah ! never may malignant skies
 Blast the fresh glories of your plains :
 Nor pestilence with poisonous breath,
 Waste your thin towns with livid death :
 Nor war's stern power deface
 The blooming flowers that youth's fair season grace.
 Still may your chiefs, a reverend band,
 Around the hallowed altars stand ;
 And ardent for the State
 Pour the warm vow to Heaven's high Lord,
 The great, the just ; whose will adored
 With hoar law tempers fate.
 Still rise new chiefs, a lengthened line
 (Kind on their birth, Diana, shine !)
 The brave, the wise, the good :
 But never discord's dread alarms
 Your madd'ning cities rouse to arms
 And stain your streets with blood :
 Nor pale disease her sickly dew display,
 Touched by thy golden beams, ambrosial fount of day.

Epode.

Fav'ring seasons grace the year,
 Crown with rich fruits your cultured plains ;
 The joyful flock, the sportive steer,
 Bound wanton o'er your wide domains.
 Each immortal showering treasures,
 Wake the soft melodious measures ;

Let the chastely-warbled lay
The Muses' rapture-breathing shell obey.
Firm may the honours of your laws remain,
And prudence in your counsels reign :
Just to yourselves, and to the stranger kind,
May peace to sleep consign the bloodless sword ;
Each honour to your country's gods assigned ;
Each laurelled shrine with hallowed rites adored ;
The parent's hoary head with reverence crowned ;
View this, ye righteous gods, and stretch protection round !

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. I like this well : wise are these votive strains.
But though your father brings unwelcome tidings,
New, and unlooked for, fear not you th' event.
From yon high mound, where first you suppliant stood,
I saw a ship, I marked its waving streamer,
Its swelling sails, and all its gallant trim :
Its prow with heedful eye observes its way,
Obedient to the helm that guides behind ;
Unfriendly sight ! the sailors too I marked,
Conspicuous in white robes their sable limbs.
Th' attendant vessels, proudly riding, sweep
The watery way ; she foremost near the land
Now furls her sails, and all the shouting crew
Bend to the eager oar. Behoves you now
Sedate and sage attention, nor neglect
These gods. I haste to bring their generous aid,
The patrons, the protectors of your cause.
Haply some herald may be sent, with charge
To claim you as their prize : it shall not be :
Fear not th' event : but should our aid come slow,
Forget not the protection of this place.
Be comforted : the day, the hour shall come,

When he, that dares affront the gods, shall feel
Their chastening vengeance bursting on his head.

CHOR. How my frame trembles ! Ah ! my father, see
With winged speed the ships arrive ; between
No interval of time ; my stiffening limbs
Are chained with fear, and ev'ry hope of safety,
If safety lies in flying far, is lost.

DAN. Since this decree is passed, fear not, my child ;
Argos, I know, will arm in your defence.

CHOR. Fatally fierce they are, and on their pride
Destruction waits, and never-sated war,
These sons of old Ægyptus, not to thee
Unknown. E'en now their firm-compacted ships
Black o'er the angry deep insulting ride,
Eager to land their sable-tinctured hosts.

DAN. And they shall find a host, whose toil-strung arms
Relax not in the sun's meridian heat.

CHOR. Forsake me not, ah ! leave me not alone,
I pray thee, father ; a forsaken woman
Is very weak : their wily, faithless minds,
Like obscene crows, spare not the hallowed altar.

DAN. Now fair befall our cause, if their mad rage,
Insulting thee, my child, insult the gods.

CHOR. Neither these tridents, nor this solemn scene
Will awe them to refrain their impious hands.
They scorn the gods, and with unhallowed force
Rush madly on, like savage, rav'ning dogs.

DAN. But dogs, they say, yield to the mast'ring wolves ;
And the soft reed to the firm-spiked corn.

CHOR. They have the force of wild and savage beasts ;
We must escape them therefore, as we may.

DAN. Slow are th' advances of a naval train ;
Slow the arrangements of the ships ; the care
To fix the cables, slow ; th' experienced chiefs

Trust not too soon the biting anchor's hold,
 If stationed where no harbour winds around :
 And when the golden sun withdraws his beams,
 The gloom of night brings many an anxious care ;
 Nor dare they, till their vessels ride secure,
 Attempt to land. But take thou heed, nor let
 Thy fears impel thee to neglect the gods ;
 But ask their aid. The State will not disdain
 My age, that tells with youthful warmth its tidings.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Ye rising hills, whose reverend heads
 Majestic wave their awe-commanding shades,
 What woes our shudd'ring souls await ?
 Or flying on the wings of fear,
 In some cavern dark and drear
 Deep shall we plunge, and hide us from our fate ?
 Oh, that I could as smoke arise,
 That rolls its black wreaths through the air ;
 Mix with the clouds, that o'er the skies
 Show their light forms, and disappear :
 Or like the dust be tossed
 By ev'ry sportive wind, till all be lost !

Antistrophe 1.

Such thoughts in deep despair I roil,
 The gloom of sorrow black'ning on my soul.
 Ah, father, the vexed ocean round
 What horrors struck thy aching sight !
 Dismay, and pale affright,
 And wild amazement sink me to the ground.

Shall then the base, detested band
 With rude touch seize us for their own?
 No : rather shall this daring hand
 Prepare for death the conscious zone ;
 Rather in deep disdain
 My pale shade sink to Pluto's dreary reign.

Strophe 2.

Oh, might I sit sublime in air,
 Where wat'ry clouds the freezing snows prepare !
 Or on a rock whose threatening brow,
 Th' ærial vultures unreached seat,
 In solitary state
 Frowns ruinous o'er th' affrighted waste below :
 Rolled headlong down its rugged side,
 A mangled carcase let me lie,
 Ere dragged a pale, unwilling bride,
 Victim to sad necessity ;
 And my indignant heart
 Feel the keen wounds of sorrow's tort'ring dart.

Antistrophe 2.

Throw me, ere that detested day,
 To prowling dogs and rav'nous birds a prey.
 No form of death affrights me now :
 O thou, assigned the wretches' friend,
 To bid his miseries end,
 And in oblivion's balm to steep his woe ;
 Come, gentle death, ere that sad hour
 Which drags me to the nuptial bed ;
 And let me find in thy soft power
 A refuge from the force I dread ;
 Oh spread thy sable cloud,
 And in its unpierced gloom our sorrows shroud !

Epode.

Higher let your voices rise,
 And swell the choral descant to the skies,
 Notes of such a lofty vein,
 That gods may listen to the solemn strain!
 Eternal Sire, from heaven's high throne,
 If thy indignant eyeballs glow
 With vengeance at foul deeds below,
 Look down, thou sovereign of the world, look down:
 Ægyptus' sons, a ruffian race,
 Our flying footsteps chase;
 And on our trembling, weeping band
 Advance to lay their vengeful hand:
 Extend thy golden scales,
 For without thee what mortal worth avails?
 By land, by sea,
 They seek their prey;
 Oh! ere they seize it, may the ruffians die!
 Again I raise the mournful cry.
 They come, they come, the haughty foes:
 These are but preludes to my woes,
 To yon strong rampires bend your flight;
 By sea, by land they rush severe,
 And with their stern and threat'ning air,
 The softness of our sex affright.
 Look down, thou sovereign of the world, and save!

HERALD, CHORUS.

HERALD. Hence to the ship, hence with your utmost speed.

CHOR. No, never, never; drag me, drag me, stab me,
 Rend from these mangled limbs my bleeding head.

HER. Hence to the ship, abandoned wretches, hie,
 That waits to waft you, with your injured lords,

O'er the wide billows of yon briny deep.
Haste, or this spear, with bridal garlands bound,
Taught a less gentle office, there shall place you
Smarting with many a wound ; there sit, and sigh.
No more, I charge you, of these froward moods,
Or force shall drive them from you.

CHOR.

Woe is me !

HER. Haste, quit these seats, haste to the ships, and go
Inviolatè to the city of the pious.

CHOR. Ah ! never may these eyes again behold
That rich enlivening stream, which he who drinks
Feels his fresh blood dance lively in his veins.
My unpolluted life amidst these seats,
These sacred seats, old man, preserve me sacred.

HER. Nay, tell not me ; but to the ship, the ship,
Averse or not averse, quick shalt thou go ;
Or vengeance, chastening vengeance to thy feet
Add wings and up the barque's tall sides pursue thee.

CHOR. Ah woe, woe, woe ! Barbarian, may the winds
In all their fury hurl thee on the rocks
Of rough Cilicia's brow ; or dash thy corse
An outcast on the swelling sands beneath.

HER. Cry, shriek, invoke the gods ; yet shalt thou not
Escape the ship of Ægypt ; louder shriek,
Cry woe, and woe : if the name please thee, take it.

CHOR. Ah wretched me ! Pollution of the land,
How fierce he yells ! Insolent wretch, away,
Thy rude touch wounds me : for this ruffian force,
Rise, mighty Nile, overwhelm him beneath thy floods !

HER. Hence, I command you ; to the rolling vessel
Instantly hence : if one presumes to linger,
I pay no reverence to your crisped locks,
This hand perforce shall drag her by her tresses.

CHOR. Ah me, immortal Sire ! Insolent force

Will hurry me away : it drags me now
Entangled in its nets ; and all my hopes
Are vanished like a dream, a dusky dream.
Earth, I adjure thee, shield me ; shield me, Jove,
God of this land ; save me in this hard conflict.

HER. Gods of this land ! They awe not me ; my youth
They nourished not, nor to old age upheld me.

CHOR. Near me the serpent rolls his train, and soon
Will, like a pois'nous viper, dart upon me.
Earth, I adjure thee, shield me ; shield me, Jove,
God of this land ; save me in this hard conflict.

HER. If one of you perversely lingers here,
Your richly purpled stoles shall find no mercy.

CHOR. Ye rulers of the city, force o'erpowers me.

HER. You shall see many rulers, doubt not, soon,
Ægyptus' sons ; no anarchy is here.

CHOR. Unlooked-for ruin comes, O king, upon us,

HER. I must use force, I see, and pluck you hence
Dragged by the locks, since my words move you not.

PELASGUS, HERALD, CHORUS.

PELASGUS. Whence these outrageous deeds ? How dares
thy pride
Offer this insult to the land, where dwell
Pelasgian men ? Or didst thou deem that women
Alone inhabit here ? Thy savage acts,
Barbarian, touch the dignity of Greece.
Learn thy mistake then, and thine high offence.

HER. Against what law, what right have I offended ?

PEL. First, dost thou know thou art a stranger here ?

HER. A stranger here I found what I had lost.

PEL. To whom hast thou addressed thee for protection ?

HER. To Mercury, who directs the stranger's search.

PEL. The gods ! Thou hast no reverence for the gods.

HER. Yes, for the gods of Nile, a holy reverence.

PEL. But none for these, if right I understand thee.

HER. These lead I hence ; and who shall take them from me ?

PEL. Dare but to touch them, dear shalt thou abide it.

HER. Is this your hospitality to strangers ?

PEL. I owe the ruffian none, that robs the gods.

HER. Go then, announce this to Ægyptus' sons.

PEL. It suits not me ; my soul disdains the office.

HER. Then let me speak, and plainly ; it becomes
A herald's office to speak all things plain.

How ruffians, say, how robbers of the gods,

This kindred train, that comes to claim these women ?

Not by the voice of evidence does Mars

Decide these things ; nor for a mulct of gold

Compound the dreadful quarrel ; ere it ends

Many shall shed their dear blood in the dust,

Many lie low on earth, and bite the ground.

PEL. Hear then what honour prompts, what justice dictates,
And bear it to the partners of thy voyage.

If these approve, if their free will incline them,

Lead them, if gentle words win their assent.

This firm decree the suffrage of the State

Has rendered sacred, not by force to yield

A train of females ; this resolve, be sure,

Is strongly fixed, and never can be shaken.

Though not engraved on tablets, nor enrolled

In seal-stamped volumes, my free voice declares it

In words of plainest import. Take thy answer ;

Hence from my sight, with thy best speed be gone.

HER. Know then a rising war awaits thy choice ;
Valour and conquest crown the helms of men.

PEL. You shall be met by men, whose lively blood
Dull draughts of barley wine have never clogged.

Now virgins, with your train of faithful friends,
Dismiss your fears ; enter this town, whose walls
Strong-built, and crowned with many a bulwark, lift
Their towered heads impregnable : within
The State has many structures ; nor is mine
A thin inhabitation ; such a house,
Where cheerful numbers live in wealth and splendour,
May haply please you : if a private mansion,
To your own use devote, be more your wish ;
The best of these, the most approved, is yours ;
Make your free choice : I will protect you ; all
This friendly State, supporting their decree,
Will shield you. What, wish you more powerful guardians ?

CHOR. For these thy bounties may the bounteous gods
Shower blessings on thy head, thou gen'rous king
Of brave Pelasgia ! But benevolent
Send us our father Danaus, on whose firm
And provident counsels we rely. His care
And sage advice is needful, where to choose
Our dwelling, our secure retreat. The tongue
Of slander is too prompt with wanton malice
To wound the stranger : act we then with caution.

PEL. With honour, lovely virgins, with the voice
Of fair-applauding fame amidst our city
Shall your appointment be, where'er your father
Assigns to each her mansion and attendants.

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. Daughters, it well becomes you to these
As to th' immortal gods, to offer vows, [Argives,
Libation, sacrifice, and ev'ry rite
Religion knows ; so liberal their protection,
So readily they lent their friendly ears,
And favoured all my deeds against these youths,

These kindred youths, whose headlong pride thus haunts
you.

Behold these spears around, to me assigned
An honourable guard, that no rude hand
With barb'rous rage may lift the secret sword,
And with my blood pollute the pious land.
This grace, this condescension claims my thanks,
And you with grateful minds honour it ever.
To all the wise instructions of your father,
Graved in your faithful tablets, grave these also,
That after-times may hold this stranger train
In reverence. Know then this, the tongue of malice
Is ever prompt to wound the stranger's fame
With stings of infamy : I charge you then
Disgrace me not. I see your blooming age,
Enforcing soft desire ; I know how hard
To guard the lovely flowers that grace that season.
Beasts love to riot on their sweets, and man,
Each insect, and each wanton-winged bird.
The Queen of Love proclaims their opening bloom ;
Ah, would she suffer it to remain uncropt !
And on the delicate tints, that kindling glow
On beauty's vermeil cheek, each roving youth
With melting wishes darts the amorous glance.
We brook not this ; else why these various toils,
These wand'rings o'er the wide-extended main ?
Let us not work this scandal to ourselves,
And triumph to our foes. Two mansions here
Are offered to your choice ; Pelasgus one
Would give, and one the State ; beneath whose roof
No male attendant waits : the choice is easy.
Only observe these precepts of your father,
And guard with heedful care your virgin honour.

CHOR. O may the powers of Heaven in all besides

Be gracious to us ; in our virgin honour
Have confidence : be their high wills unchanged,
I shall not deviate from my mind's fixed plan.

CHOR. Go then, ye pure, ye pious train,
In triumph go to those blessed powers
That o'er this State extend their reign
Imperial guardians of these towers ;
Imperial guardians of these glades,
Along whose hallowed shades
His dark'ning stream old Erasinus rolls :
With courage arm your souls.
No more to Nile's deep floods belong
The warbled voice, the raptured song ;
Our praise Pelasgia's towns demand ;
And each fresh fount, that loves to lead
His humid train through grove, through mead,
And rolls luxuriance through the land.
Virgin Diana, bend thine eye,
And piteous of a virgin's woes,
O save ensnared chastity,
From the rude touch of hated foes :
Nor see thy struggling vot'ries led
Where Venus decks the bed !
Nor, Queen of Love, shall our mellifluous lays
Be silent in thy praise :
For thou, next Heaven's imperial queen,
In highest grace with Jove art seen,
And mighty deeds declare thy power :
The passions hear thy soft control ;
Thy sweet voice melts the willing soul,
Enchanted with thy honied lore.

Round thee, where'er thou lead'st the way,
Joyful the frolic Cupids rove ;

And as their antic sports they play,

Whisper the harmony of love.

But what have I with love or joy?

My peace wild fears annoy,

The miseries of flight, pursuit's alarms,

And slaughter-threat'ning arms :

Why else the quick, the fav'ring gales

Waft o'er the waves their flying sails?

SEMICHOR. This is the fixed decree of fate ;

And thus high Heaven's unbounded Lord,

Pronounced th' irrevocable word,

And doomed us to the nuptial state.

CHOR. Ah ! never may his sovereign will

Me to Ægyptus' sons unite !

SEMICHOR. This is to grasp at shadows still,

And soothe thy soul with vain delight.

CHOR. Know'st thou his will ? Or has thine eye

Looked through futurity ?

SEMICHOR. His mind I dare not scan, immense, profound :

And thou thy wishes bound ;

'Gainst Heaven's high will exclaim no more,

But in mute meekness learn t' adore.

CHOR. Almighty Sire, whose healing hand

Soothed thy loved Iö's soul to rest,

With comfort cheer this sorrowing breast,

And save us from this hostile band !

For me through Fortune's cloud Hope beams her ray,

And from that bright'ning part goes bright'ning on ;

So right succeeding right shall force its way,

And the good gods complete what Greece begun.

THE SEVEN CHIEFS AGAINST THEBES.

BESIDES this Siege of Thebes, Æschylus wrote three tragedies on the subjects of Laius, Œdipus, and the Sphinx, which are lost. Woe to the ravenous jaws of time, that have devoured these precious morsels of antiquity; we should otherwise have had from this great master a regular, and, no doubt, an interesting account of this illustrious and unfortunate family. It is said that Æschylus particularly valued himself upon this tragedy: not without reason; for it has all that bold painting with which we might expect his martial genius would embellish such a subject. Always magnificent, he has fixed the scene in Thebes before the principal temple: the clash of arms, the neighing of the horses, and the shouts of the soldiers are heard: Eteocles appears surrounded with the citizens, whom he animates to defend the walls: in the meantime the Chorus, which is composed of Theban ladies, distracted with their fears, are hanging on the statues of the gods that adorn the area before the temple. Longinus has remarked on the sublimity of the dialogue; it is worthy an experienced veteran and a brave young king arming in defence of his crown, his life, and his honour; it is worthy of Æschylus. The characters of the Seven Chiefs that command in the attack are exquisitely

marked and varied ; and their impetuous ferocity is admirably contrasted with the calm and deliberate courage of those appointed to oppose them. The shields of six of these chiefs are charged with armorial bearings expressive of their characters, and as regular as if they had been marshalled by a herald-at-arms : the impresses are devised with a fine imagination and wonderful propriety.

The judicious choice of the persons of the Chorus forms one of the principal graces of this tragedy, as it gave the poet an opportunity of mixing the natural timidity of the female character with the animated and fiery daring of heroes, the fears of these daughters of Cadmus presenting nothing to their imagination but the scenes of distress and horror which the insolence of conquest spreads through a vanquished and plundered city, and this painted in the warmest colours, in the strongest style of *Aeschylus*.

Besides the intrinsic beauty of this tragedy, which is very striking, it has to us this further merit, that it gave birth to three of the finest poems of antiquity, the *Antigone* of *Sophocles*, the *Phoenissæ* of *Euripides*, and the *Thebaid* of *Statius*.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ETEOCLES.
SOLDIER.
ANTIGONE.

ISMENE.
HERALD.
CHORUS OF THEBAN VIRGINS.

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETEOCLES. Ye citizens of Cadmus, it behoves
The man that guides the helm of State, to speak
What the sad times require ; nor suffer sleep
To weigh his eyelids down. For if success
Attends our toils, to the good gods we bow,

The authors of the blessing : should misfortune,
Avert it, Heaven ! befall, Eteocles
Shall hear his name alone wide through the city
Insulted by each tongue, that vents its spleen
In mutinous reproach, or loud laments :
From which may Jove, the guardian of our State,
Defend the sons of Cadmus ! But this hour
Calls on you all, whether your flow'ry spring
Yet wants the prime of manhood, or your age
Puts forth its firmest strength, t' exert your powers,
Well it becomes you, to defend the city,
The altars of the gods presiding here
(Ah, never may their honours be effaced !)
Your children, and this land, your common parent,
And dearest nurse, who on her fost'ring soil
Upheld with bounteous care your infant steps,
And trained you to this service, that your hands
In her defence might lift the faithful shield.
E'en to this day indeed the gods incline
To favour us ; and though so long immured
Within our rampires, each bold work of war
Hath prospered in our hands. But now the seer,
That listens to the flight of birds, and thence
Forms in his prescient mind the sure presage,
Guiltless of fire, from their oracular wings
Draws his deep skill, and warns us that the powers
Of Greece, combined against us, in the night
Advancing, meditate the dark assault.
Haste all then to the walls, haste to the bulwarks
With all your arms, fill every tower, secure
Each pass, stand firm at every gate, be bold,
Nor fear th' assailing numbers : Heaven is with us.
Meanwhile on every quarter have I sent
To observe their forces, and descry their march :

By these, not charged, I trust, in vain to watch,
Informed I guard against the wiles of war.

SOLDIER, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

SOLDIER. Illustrious king of Thebes, I bring thee tidings
Of firm assurance from the foe ; these eyes
Beheld each circumstance. Seven valiant chiefs
Slew on the black-orbed shield the victim bull,
And, dipping in the gore their furious hands,
In solemn oath attest the god of war,
Bellona, and the carnage-loving power
Of terror, sworn from their firm base to rend
These walls, and lay their ramparts in the dust ;
Or, dying, with their warm blood steep this earth.
Each in Adrastus' car some dear remembrance
Piled to their distant parents, whilst their eyes
Dropped tears, but on their face was no remorse.
Each soul of iron glowing with the rage
Of valour, as the lion when he glares
Determined battle. What I now relate
Sleeps not, nor lingers : round the urn I left them,
By lot deciding to what gate each chief
Shall lead his forces. These against select
The best, the bravest of the sons of Thebes,
And instant at the gates assign their stations.
For all in arms the Argive host comes on
Involved in dust, and from the snorting steeds
The thick foam falls, and dewes the whitened fields.
Be thine the provident pilot's gen'rous care,
Guard well the town, ere yet the storm assails it ;
E'en now the waves of war roar o'er the plain :
Seize then this fair occasion, instant seize it.
My faithful eye this day shall hold the watch,
That well informed, no danger may surprise thee.

ETE. O Jove, O Earth, O all ye guardian gods ;
And thou dread curse, the fury of my father,
Of fatal power, O rend not from its roots
This ruined city by th' insulting foe
Trampled in dust, her sweet Helladian tongue
Silent, and all her sacred fires extinct !
Ah ! never let this land, this town of Cadmus
Bend her free neck beneath the servile yoke !
Protect her, save her ; as you share her honours
I plead : a flourishing State reveres the gods.

CHOR. Woe, woe, intolerable woe !
Fierce from their camps the hosts advance,
Before their march with thund'ring tread
Proud o'er the plain their fiery coursers prance,
And hither bend their footsteps dread :
Yon cloud of dust that chokes the air,
A true though tongueless messenger,
Marks plain the progress of the foe.
And now the horrid clash of arms,
That, like the torrent, whose impetuous tide
Roars down the mountain's craggy side,
Shook the wide fields with fierce alarms,
With nearer terrors strikes our souls,
And through our chaste recesses rolls :
Hear, all ye powers of Heaven, propitious hear,
And check the furies of this threat'ning war !

The crowded walls around
Loud clamours rend the sky ;
Whilst ranged in deep array th' embattled powers
Their silver shields lift high,
And, level with the ground
To lay their rampired heads, assail our towers.
What guardian god shall I implore ?

Bending at what sacred shrine
 Call from their happy seats what powers divine,
 And suppliant ev'ry sculptured form adore ?
 The time demands it : why then, why delay ?—
 The sound of arms, swells on my affrighted ear.—
 Hold now the pall, the garland, as you pray.—
 Hark ! 'tis the rude clash of no single spear.

Stern god of war,
 Dost thou prepare
 Thy sacred city to betray ?
 Look down, look down ;
 O save thine own ;
 Nor leave us to the foe a prey :
 If e'er thy soul had pleasure in the brave,
 God of the golden helm, hear us, and save !

And all ye powers, whose guardian care
 Protects these walls, this favoured land,
 O hear these pious, suppliant strains ;
 Propitious aid us, aid a virgin band,
 And save us from the victor's chains !
 For all around with crested pride
 High waves the helm's terrific tide,
 Tossed by the furious breath of war.
 And thou, great Jove, almighty Sire,
 Confound with foul defeat these Argive powers
 Whose arms insult our leaguered towers,
 And fright our souls with hostile fire.
 The reins that curb their proud steeds 'round,
 Rattle, and death is in the sound :
 'Gainst our seven gates seven chiefs of high command,
 In arms spear-proof, take their appointed stand.

Daughter of Jove, whose soul
 Glows at th' embattled plain :

And thou by whom the pawing steed arose,
Great monarch of the main
Curbed by thy strong control ;
From our fears free us, free us from our foes !
On thee, stern Mars, again I call :
Haste thee, god, and with thee bring
The Queen of Love, from whose high race we spring ;
If Cadmus e'er was dear, defend his wall !
Thou terror of the savage Phœbus, hear,
In all thy terrors rush upon the foe !
Chaste virgin-huntress, goddess ever dear,
Wing the keen arrow from thy ready bow !
Hark ! fraught with war
The groaning car,
Imperial Juno shakes the ground !
Fierce as they pass,
The wheels of brass,
Dear virgin-huntress ! roar around :
The gleaming lustre of the brandished spear
Glares terribly across the troubled air.
Alas my country ! must these eyes,
Must these sad eyes behold thy fall ?
Ah, what a storm of stones, that flies,
And winged with ruin smites the wall !
O Phœbus ! at each crowded gate
Begins the dreadful work of fate ;
Each arm the thund'ring falchion wields,
And clashes on the sounding shields.
O thou, whose kind and matchless might,
Blest Onca, through the glowing fight
Obedient conquest joys t' attend,
All our seven gates, dread queen, defend !
And all ye mighty, guardian powers,
That here preside, protect our towers :

Nor the war-wasted town betray,
 To fierce and dissonant foes a prey !
 Ye gods, deliverers of this land,
 To whom we stretch the suppliant hand,
 Hear us, O hear our virgin prayer,
 And show that Thebes is yet your care !
 By every solemn temple, every shrine,
 Each hallowed orgie, and each rite divine,
 Each honour to your power in reverence paid,
 Hear us, ye guardian gods, hear us, and aid !

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETE. It is not to be borne, ye wayward race :
 Is this your best, is this the aid you lend
 The State, the fortitude with which you steel
 The souls of the besieged, thus falling down
 Before these images to wail, and shriek
 With lamentations loud ? Wisdom abhors you.
 Nor in misfortune, nor in dear success,
 Be woman my associate : if her power
 Bears sway, her insolence exceeds all bounds
 But if she fears, woe to that house and city.
 And now, by holding counsel with weak fear,
 You magnify the foe, and turn our men
 To flight : thus are we ruined by ourselves.
 This ever will arise from suffering women
 To intermix with men. But mark me well,
 Whoe'er henceforth dares disobey my orders,
 Be it or man or woman, old or young,
 Vengeance shall burst upon him, the decree
 Stands irreversible, and he shall die.
 War is no female province, but the scene
 For men : hence, home ; nor spread your mischiefs here.
 Hear you, or not ? Or speak I to the deaf ?

CHOR. Dear to thy country, son of *Œdipus*,
My soul was seized with terror, when I heard
The rapid car roll on, its whirling wheels
Grating harsh thunder; and the iron curb
Incessant clashing on the barbed steed.

ETE. What! should the pilot, when the labouring barque
Scarce rides the swelling surge, forsake the helm,
And seek his safety from the sculptured prow?

CHOR. Yet therefore to these ancient images,
Confiding in their sacred power, I ran,
When at the gates sharp sleet of arrowy shower
Drove hard; my fears impelled me to implore
The blest gods to protect the city's strength.

ETE. Pray that our towers repel the hostile spear.

CHOR. This shall the gods——

ETE. The gods, they say, prepare
To quit their seats, and leave a vanquished town.

CHOR. Ah, never, whilst I breathe the vital air,
May their blest train forsake us; nor these eyes
Behold destruction raging through our streets,
And in fierce flames our stately structures blaze!

ETE. Let not these invocations of the gods
Make you improvident; remember rather
Obedience is the mother of success,
Wedded to safety: so the wise assure us.

CHOR. Yet in the gods is a superior power,
Which often in afflictions clears away
Th' impenetrable cloud, whose sullen gloom
Sharp misery hung before our darkened eyes.

ETE. The victim, and the hallowed sacrifice,
When the foes menace, are the task of men;
Thine, to be silent, and remain at home.

CHOR. That we possess our city yet unconquered,
That yet our towers repel th' assailing foe,

Is from the gods : from them our voice calls down
Further success. Why should this move thy anger ?

ETE. It does not, virgin : no ; your pious vows
I blame not. But be silent ; lest thy fears,
Swelling to this excess, dismay our youth.

CHOR. Affrighted at the sudden din of war,
And trembling with my fears, with hasty foot
I sought this citadel, this sacred seat.

ETE. If haply now your eyes behold the dead,
Or wounded ; burst not forth in loud laments :
For blood and carnage is the food of war.

CHOR. Distinct I hear the fiery-neighing steed.

ETE. Whate'er thou hear'st, it asks not thy attention.

CHOR. The city shakes beneath th' enclosing foes.

ETE. Be satisfied : to guard it is my charge.

CHOR. I fear : the clash is louder at the gates.

ETE. Peace ; nor distract the city with thy cries.

CHOR. Ye social powers, leave not our walls defenceless.

ETE. Woe on thee ! Canst thou not bear this in silence ?

CHOR. Gods of this State, save me from slavery !

ETE. Me wouldst thou make a slave, and all the State.

CHOR. All-powerful Jove, turn on the foe the sword !

ETE. Heavens, of what quality are women formed ?

CHOR. Wretched, as men are, in their country's ruin.

ETE. Still wail thy country ? Still embrace these gods ?

CHOR. Wild with my fears, I speak I know not what.

ETE. Wouldst thou indulge me in a light request ?

CHOR. Speak it at once, quickly shall I obey.

ETE. Be silent, wretch ; nor terrify thy friends.

CHOR. I will ; and with them bear what fate decrees.

ETE. I praise thy resolution. Clasp no more
These images ; but stand apart, and ask
Happier events ; entreat the friendly gods
To aid us. Hear my vows ; then instant raise

The heaven-appeasing Pæan, whose high strains
Of solemn import, 'midst her sacred rites,
Greece pours symphonious ; strains that raise the soul
To generous courage, and the fixed disdain
Of fear and danger. To the guardian gods
Whose tutelary power protects our fields,
Protects our crowded streets ; to Dirce's fount ;
Nor thee, Ismenus, will I pass unhonoured ;
If conquest crowns our helms, and saves our city,
The hallowed sacrifice shall bleed, and load
Their smoking altars ; this victorious hand
Shall raise the glittering trophies, and hang high,
To grace their sacred walls, the rich-wrought vests,
Spoils of the war, rent from the bleeding foe.
Breathe to the gods these vows : but let no sigh
Break forth, no lamentation rude and vain :
Weak is their power to save thee from thy fate.
My charge shall be at our seven gates to fix
Six of our bravest youth, myself the seventh,
In dreadful opposition to the foe ;
Ere yet the violent and tumultuous cry
Calls me perforce to join the fiery conflict.

CHORUS.

I. I.

I would obey thee ; but my breast
Yet pants with fear and knows not rest ;
Too near my heart distracting care
Wakes all the horrors of despair :
And as the trembling dove, whose fears
Keep watch in her uneasy bower,
Thinks in each rustling leaf she hears
The serpent gliding to devour,

I tremble at each sullen sound
 Of clashing arms, that roars around :
 With all their troops, with all their powers,
 Fierce they advance to storm our towers ;
 Now hurtling in the darkened sky,
 What does my cruel fate prepare !
 Rude, battering stones incessant fly,
 And all the missive storm of war.

I. 2.

Guard, ye great gods, O guard our wall,
 Nor let the towers of Cadmus fall !
 Ah ! to what fairer, richer plain
 Your radiant presence will you deign,
 These fields abandoned to the foes,
 Through whose crisped shades and smiling meads,
 Jocundly warbling as she goes,
 Dirce her liquid treasures leads,
 And boasts that Tethys never gave,
 Nor all her nymphs, a purer wave !
 Deign then, ye gods that guard this land,
 Here deign to take your hallowed stand :
 Assert your glory : on the foe
 Pour rout, and havoc, and dismay,
 Confusion wild, soul-with'ring woe,
 And flight, that flings his arms away.

I. 3.

Hear then the mournful, solemn strain :
 For dreadful were its fate, should this strong wall,
 'This ancient, rampired city fall,
 And spread its light dust o'er th' encumbered plain,
 Beneath the proud Achaian spear,
 Dishonoured sunk, the waste of war.

Should the fresh virgin's bloom, the matron's age,
By the fierce victor's fiery rage,
Their robes all rent, their bleeding bosoms bare,
Be dragged by their loose-flowing hair,
Like horses, a reluctant prize ;
The desolated streets re-echoing to their cries ?

II. 1.

Before my sad presaging soul
What scenes of imaged horror roll !
I see the tender virgin's woe,
Ere yet her ripened beauties glow ;
The hateful way I see her tread,
Forcibly torn from her sweet home :
Happier, far happier are the dead ;
They rest within the silent tomb.
But, the walls humbled to the ground,
What dreadful miseries rage around !
Furious one leads the vengeful bands ;
One stains with blood his reeking hands ;
Wide roll, outrageous to destroy,
The dusky smoke, and torrent fires ;
Whilst slaught'ring Mars with hideous joy
The heaven-contemning rage inspires.

II. 2.

From house to house, from street to street,
The crashing flames roar round, and meet ;
Each way the fiery deluge preys,
And girds us with the circling blaze.
The brave, that 'midst these dire alarms
For their lost country greatly darc,
And fired with vengeance rush to arms,
Fall victims to the blood-stained spear.

The bleeding babe, with innocent cries,
 Drops from his mother's breast, and dies.
 See rapine rushes, bent on prey,
 His hasty step brooks no delay.
 The spoiler, loaded with his store,
 Envious the loaded spoiler views ;
 Disdains another should have more,
 And his insatiate toil renews.

II. 3.

Thick on the earth the rich spoil lies :
 For the rude plunderer's restless-rolling tide,
 Their worthless numbers waving wide,
 Drop in their wild haste many a glitt'ring prize.
 Whilst, in her chaste apartment bred,
 The trembling virgin captive led,
 Pours, in the anguish of her soul, the tear :
 And, torn from all her heart holds dear,
 The youthful bride, a novice yet in woe,
 Obeys the haughty, happy foe.
 But ere such horrors blast my sight,
 May these sad eyes close in eternal night !

SEMICHOR. See, from his watch the veteran returns,
 Bearing, I ween, fresh tidings from yon host,
 Of highest import : quick his foot, and hasty.
 This way, behold, the son of *Œdipus*,
 The king himself advances, pressing on
 His hurried step to learn their new-formed measures.

ETEOCLES, SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOLDIER. Now I can tell thee, for I know it well,
 The disposition of the foe, and how
 Each at our gates takes his allotted post.
 Already near the *Prætian* gate in arms

Stands Tydeus raging ; for the prophet's voice
Forbids his foot to pass Ismenus' stream,
The victims not propitious : at the pass
Furious, and eager for the fight, the chief,
Fierce as the dragon when the mid-day sun
Calls forth his glowing terrors, raves aloud,
Reviles the sage, as forming tim'rous league
With war and fate. Frowning he speaks, and shakes
The dark crest streaming o'er his shaded helm
In triple wave ; whilst dreadful ring around
The brazen bosses of his shield, impressed
With this proud argument. A sable sky
Burning with stars ; and in the midst full-orbed
A silver moon, the eye of night, o'er all
Awful in beauty pours her peerless light.
Clad in these proud habiliments, he stands
Close to the river's margin, and with shouts
Demands the war, like an impatient steed,
That pants upon the foaming curb, and waits
With fiery expectation the known signal,
Swift at the trumpet's sound to burst away.
Before the Prætian gate, its bars removed,
What equal chief wilt thou appoint against him ?

ETE. This military pride, it moves not me :
The gorgeous blazonry of arms, the crest
High waving o'er the helm, the roaring boss,
Harmless without the spear, imprint no wound.
The sable night, spangled with golden stars,
On his proud shield impressed, perchance may prove
A gloomy presage. Should the shades of night
Fall on his dying eyes, the boastful charge
May to the bearer be deemed ominous,
And he the prophet of his own destruction.
Against his rage the son of Astacus,

That breathes deliberate valour, at that gate
 Will I appoint commander ; bent on deeds
 Of glory, but a votary at the shrine
 Of modesty, he scorns the arrogant vaunt
 As base, but bids brave actions speak his worth.
 The flower of that bold stem, which from the ground
 Rose armed, and fell not in the deathful fight,
 Is Menalippus ; him his parent earth
 Claims as her own, and in her natural right
 Calls him to guard her from the hostile spear :
 But the brave deed the die of war decides.

CHOR. Go then, my guardian hero, go ;
 And may each fav'ring god with bright success
 Thy gen'rous valour bless :
 For at thy country's dear command
 Thou arm'st thy righteous hand,
 To pour her vengeance on the foe.
 Yet my sad heart must sigh,
 When on the blood-empurpled ground,
 Gored with many a gaping wound,
 I see my dearest friends expiring lie.

SOL. May the gods crown his valiant toil with conquest.
 But Capaneus against th' Electran gates
 Takes his allotted post, and tow'ring stands
 Vast as the earth-born giants, and inflamed
 To more than mortal daring : horribly
 He menaces the walls ; may Heaven avert
 His impious rage ! vaunts that, the gods assenting
 Or not assenting, his strong hand shall rend
 Their rampires down ; that e'en the rage of Jove
 Descending on the field should not restrain him.
 His lightnings, and his thunders winged with fire,
 He likens to the sun's meridian heat.
 On his proud shield portraved, a naked man

Waves in his hand a blazing torch ; beneath
In golden letters, I WILL FIRE THE CITY.
Against this man— But who shall dare t' engage
His might, and dauntless his proud rage sustain ?

ETE. Advantage from advantage here arises.
The arrogant vaunts, which man's vain tongue throws out,
Shall on himself recoil. This haughty chief
Threats high, and prompt to execute his threats
Spurns at the gods, opes his unhallowed lips
In shallow exultations, hurls on high,
Weak mortal as he is, 'gainst Jove himself
Hurls his extravagant and wild defiance.
On him, I trust, the thunder winged with fire,
Far other than the sun's meridian heat,
Shall roll its vengeance. But against his pride,
Insolent vaunter, shall the glowing spirit,
That burns for glory in the daring breast
Of Polyphontes, be opposed : his arm,
Strong in Diana's tutelary aid,
Shall be a sure defence. But to thy tale ;
Who next before our gates assumes his station ?

CHOR. Yes, let him perish, the proud foe,
That storms, in savage hope, the vanquished town,
And rends its rampires down.
Him first may Heaven's almighty Sire,
Rolling his vengeful fire,
Dash in the flaming ruin low ;
Ere his impetuous spear
Bursts every bar of my retreat,
And from my virgin seat
Drags me perforce from all my soul holds dear.

SOL. Third from the brazen helm leaped forth the lot
Of fierce Eteoclus, who takes his post
Against the gates of Neis : there he whirls

His fiery-neighing steeds, that toss their heads
 Proud of their nodding plumes, eager to rush
 Against the gates, and snorting, champ their curbs
 Bossed with barbaric pride. No mean device
 Is sculptured on his shield, a man in arms,
 His ladder fixed against the enemy's walls,
 Mounts, resolute to rend their rampires down ;
 And cries aloud, the letters plainly marked
 NOT MARS HIMSELF SHALL BEAT ME FROM THE TOWERS.
 Appoint of equal hardihood some chief
 To guard the city from the servile yoke.

ETE. Such shall I send, to conquest send him ; one
 That bears not in his hand this pageantry
 Of martial pride. The hardy Megareus,
 From Creon sprung, and that bold race, which rose
 Embattled from the earth : him from the gates
 The furious neighings of the fiery steeds
 Affright not ; but his blood spilt on the earth
 Amply requites the nouriture she gave him,
 Or captive both, the man in arms, the town
 Stormed on the sculptured shield, and the proud bearer,
 Shall with their spoils adorn his father's house.

CHOR. Go then, and glory be thy guide !
 For thee, brave youth, we pour this ardent prayer,
 And fav'ring Heaven shall hear.
 Go then, my house's guardian, go,
 And rushing on the foe,
 Bravely repel their vaunting pride.
 And as each furious soul
 Hurls the ferocious menace high,
 May he, that rules the sky,
 In vengeance his indignant eyeballs roll !

SOL. At the next gate, named from the martial goddess
 Onca Minerva, stands Hippomedon.

I heard his thund'ring voice, I saw his form
 In bulk and stature proudly eminent ;
 I saw him roll his shield, large, massy, round,
 Of broad circumference ; it struck my soul
 With terror. On its orb no vulgar artist
 Expressed this image, a Typhæus huge,
 Disgoring from his foul enfouled jaws,
 In fierce effusion, wreaths of dusky smoke,
 Signal of kindling flames : its bending verge
 With folds of twisted serpents bordered round.
 With shouts the giant-chief provokes the war ;
 And in the ravings of outrageous valour
 Glares terror from his eyes. Behoves thee then
 Strong opposition to his fiery rage,
 Which at the gates e'en now spreads wild dismay.

ETE. First, Onca Pallas, holding near the gates
 Her hallowed state, abhors his furious rage ;
 And in her guardian care shall crush the pride
 Of this fell dragon. Then the son of Ænops,
 Hyperbius, of approved and steady valour,
 Shall man to man oppose him ; one that dares
 Assay his fate in the rough shock of battle ;
 In form, in spirit, and in martial arms
 Consummate ; such high grace Hermes conferred.
 In hostile arms thus man shall combat man,
 And to the battle on their sculptured shields
 Bring adverse gods ; the fierce Typhæus he,
 Breathing forth flakes of fire ; Hyperbius bears
 The majesty of Jove securely throned,
 Grasping his flaming bolt : and who e'er saw
 The Thund'rer vanquished ? In the fellowship
 Of friendly gods, the conquerors are with us,
 They with the conquered ; and with like event
 These warriors shall engage. As Jove in fight

Subdued the fell Typhæus, so his form
Emblazoned on the shield shall guard Hyperbius.

CHOR. If aught of truth my soul inspires,
This chief, that tow'ring o'er th' affrighted field
Bears on his sculptured shield
Th' enormous monster, buried deep
Beneath a mountainous heap,
Rolling in vain his turbid fires,
Monster accursed, abhorred,
By gods above, by men below ;
This chief his head shall bow
Low at the gate beneath the victor's sword.

SOL. Prophetic be thy hopes. At the north gate,
Yet hear me, king, the fifth bold warrior takes
His station near the tomb where honoured lies
Jove-born Amphion : by his spear he swears,
Which, as he grasps, he dares to venerate
More than a god, and dearer to his eyes
Than the sweet light of heaven : by this he swears
To level with the ground the walls of Thebes,
Though Jove himself oppose him. Thus exclaims
This beauteous branch sprung from a mountain nymph,
Blooming in manly youth ; the tender down
Of unripe age scarce sprouting on his cheek ;
But ruthless are his thoughts, cruel his eye,
And proudly vaunting at the gate he takes
His terrible stand. Upon his clashing shield,
Whose orb sustains the storm of war, he bears
The foul disgrace of Thebes, a rav'nous sphinx,
Fixed to the plates ; the burnished monster round
Pours a portentous gleam : beneath her lies
A Theban, mangled by her cruel fangs.
'Gainst this let each brave arm direct the spear.
No hireling he, to prostitute for gold

The war, or shame the length of way he trod,
E'en from Arcadia: such this stranger comes
Parthenopœus, and repays to Argos
Its hospitable honours, 'gainst these towers
Breathing proud menaces. The gods avert them!

ETE. That ruin, which their fierce aspiring thoughts
With impious vaunts intend, may the just gods
Turn on themselves, total defeat, and shame;
So let them perish! To this proud Arcadian
No boaster we oppose; but one whose hand
Knows its rough work, Actor, the valiant brother
Of him last named. Never will he permit
The tongue, without th' assay of warlike deeds,
To rush within the gates, and execute
Its ruinous threats; nor him, whose hostile shield
Bears sculptured that abhorred and rav'ning beast:
And many a thund'ring stroke with stern rebuke
Shall check her proud advances to the walls.
Soon shall the fav'ring gods confirm these hopes.

CHOR. These words appal my throbbing breast:
And the light tangles of my braided hair
Rise upright with my fear,
As from the impious foes around
These dreadful voices sound,
Furious with thund'ring threats exprest.
Ye powers, that rule on high,
Scatter their dreaded forces wide,
Or let their crested pride
Low in the dust beneath our rampires lie!

SOL. The sixth brave chief, that with the golden curb
Of prudence knows to check his gen'rous valour,
The fate-foretelling seer, Amphiaraus,
At th' Omolæan gate his destined post
Assumes in arms, and on the fiery Tydeus

Throws many a keen reproach, reviles him as
 A homicide, the troubler of the State,
 • The mighty author of all ill to Argos,
 With murder and the furies at his heels
 Urging Adrastus to these hateful deeds.
 Thy brother Polynices, with him leagued
 In these despiteful deeds, he blames aloud,
 Descants upon his name, and thus rebukes him,
 How grateful to the gods must this deed be,
 Glorious to hear, and in the roll of fame
 Shining to distant ages, thus to lead
 These foreign arms to waste thy bleeding country,
 To raze those princely mansions, where thy fathers,
 Heroes and demigods, once held their seats!
 But say thy cause be just, will justice dry
 Thy mother's tears? And when the furious spear,
 Hurl'd by thy hand, shall pierce thy country's bosom,
 Will she with friendly arms again receive thee?
 Prescient of fate I shall enrich this soil,
 Sunk in the hostile plain. But let us fight.
 One thing at least is mine; I will not find
 A vulgar or dishonourable death.
 So spoke the prophet; and with awful port
 Advanced his massy shield, the shining orb
 Bearing no impress: for his gen'rous soul
 Wishes to be, not to appear, the best;
 And from the culture of his modest worth
 Bears the rich fruit of great and glorious deeds.
 Him let the virtuous and the wise oppose;
 For dreadful is the foe that fears the gods.

ETE. I mourn the destiny that blends the just
 With these unhallowed wretches. Nothing worse
 In whate'er cause, than impious fellowship;
 Nothing of good is reaped; for when the field

Is sown with wrong, the ripened fruit is death.
 If with a desperate band, whose hearts are hot
 With villany, the pious hoists his sails,
 The vengeance of the gods bursts on the barque
 And sinks him with the heaven-detested crew.
 If midst a race, inhospitably bent
 On savage deeds, regardless of the gods,
 The just man fix his seat, th' impending wrath
 Spares not, but strikes him with vindictive fury,
 Crushed in the general ruin. So this seer,
 Of tempered wisdom, of unsullied honour,
 Just, good, and pious, and a mighty prophet,
 In despite to his better judgment joined
 With men of impious daring, bent to tread
 The long, irremeable way, with them
 Shall, if high Jove assist us, be dragged down
 To joint perdition. Ne'er shall he advance
 Against our gates, withheld not by base fear,
 Or cowardice of soul; but that he knows
 His fate, if Phoebus aught of truth foretells,
 To fall in fight: he loves then to be silent,
 Since what the time demands he cannot speak,
 Yet him against the strength of Lasthenes,
 Who from the stranger's inroad guards our gates,
 Shall I oppose: in manhood's vig'rous prime
 He bears the providence of age; his eye
 Quick as the lightning's glance; before his shield
 Flames his protended spear, and longs t' obey
 His hand. But victory is the gift of Heaven.

CHOR. That gift, ye great immortal powers,
 On the brave guardians of our State bestow:
 On each victorious brow
 The radiant honour bind! Oh, hear
 A virgin's pious prayer;

Chase the proud strangers from our towers ;
 Or headlong let them fall,
 Thy red right hand, almighty Sire,
 Rolling its vengeful fire,
 In flaming ruin stretched beneath our wall!

SOL. The seventh bold chief—forgive me that I name
 Thy brother, and relate the horrible vows,
 The imprecations, which his rage pours forth
 Against the city ; on fire to mount the walls,
 And from their turrets to this land proclaim,
 Rending its echoes with the song of war,
 Captivity : to meet thee sword to sword,
 Kill thee, then die upon thee : if thou livest,
 T' avenge on thee his exile and disgrace
 With the like treatment. Thund'ring vengeance thus
 The rage of Polynices calls the gods,
 Presiding o'er his country, to look down,
 And aid his vows. His well-orbed shield he holds,
 New-wrought, and with a double impress charged :
 A warrior, blazing all in golden arms,
 A female form of modern aspect leads,
 Expressing justice, as th' inscription speaks,
 YET ONCE MORE TO HIS COUNTRY, AND ONCE MORE
 'TO HIS PATERNAL THRONE I WILL RESTORE HIM.
 Such their devices. But th' important task,
 Whom to oppose against his force, is thine.
 Let not my words offend : I but relate,
 Do thou command : for thou art sov'reign here.

ETE. How dreadful is the hatred of the gods !
 Unhappy sons of CEdipus, your fate
 Claims many a tear. Ah me ! my father's curse
 Now stamps its vengeance deep. But to lament,
 Or sigh, or shed the tear, becomes me not,
 Lest more intolerable grief arise.
 Be Polynices told, ill-omened name,

Soon shall we see how far his blazoned shield
Avails ; how far inscriptions wrought in gold,
With all their futile vauntings, will restore him.
If justice, virgin daughter of high Jove,
Had ever formed his mind, or ruled his actions,
This might have been : but neither when his eyes
First saw the light of life ; nor in the growth
Of infancy ; nor in th' advancing years
Of youth ; nor in the riper age that clothes
With gradual down the manly cheek, did justice
E'er deign t' instruct, or mark him for her own.
Nor now, I ween, in this his fell intent
To crush his country will her presence aid him :
For justice were not justice, should she favour
Th' injurious outrage of his daring spirit.
In this confiding I will meet his arms
In armed opposition : who more fit ?
Chief shall engage with chief, with brother brother,
And foe with foe. Haste, arm me for the fight,
Bring forth my greaves, my hauberk, my strong spear.

CHOR. Dear to thy country, son of Œdipus,
Be not thy rage like his, whom we abhor.
Thebes has no dearth of valiant sons t' oppose
These Argives ; and their blood may be atoned ;
The death of brothers by each other slain,
That stain no expiation can atone.

ETE. Could man endure defeat without dishonour,
'Twere well : but to the dead nothing remains,
Save glory : to the dastard, and the base
Fame never pays that honourable meed.

CHOR. Ah ! whither dost thou rush ? Let not revenge,
That wildly raving shakes the furious spear,
Transport thee thus. Check this hot tide of passion.

ETE. No : since the god impels me, I will on,
And let the race of Laius, let them all,

Abhorred by Phœbus, in this storm of fate
Sink down to deep Cocytus' dreary flood.

CHOR. Cruel and murd'rous is the rage that fires thee
To deeds of death, to unpermitted blood ;
And sorrow is the bitter fruit it yields.

ETE. My father's curse, a stern relentless fury,
Rolling her tearless eyes, looks on and tells me
Glory pursues her prize, disdaining fate.

CHOR. Ah, rave not thus : fame will not call thee base
Or cowardly, if well thy life be ordered.
The gloomy fury enters not his house,
Whose hands present th' accepted sacrifice.

ETE. The gods accept not us ; and on our fall
Glory attends admiring. Why then sue
For grace, with servile fear cringeing to death ?

CHOR. For that it is at hand : its terrible power
Soothed by th' abatement of this fiery valour,
May come perchance more gentle ; now it rages.

ETE. My father's imprecations rage, and haunt
My sleep : too true the real visions rise,
And wave the bloody sword that parts his kingdoms.

CHOR. Let us persuade thee, though thou scorn'st our sex.

ETE. What would thy wish have done ? Speak it in brief.

CHOR. Ah ! go not this way : go not to this gate.

ETE. My soul's on fire ; nor shall thy words retard me.

CHOR. Conquest that spurns at right offends the gods.

ETE. Ill suit these tame words the armed warrior's ear.

CHOR. And canst thou wish to spill thy brother's blood ?

ETE. By the just gods he shall not 'scape my vengeance.

CHOR. She comes, the fierce tremendous power,

And harrows up my soul with dread ;

No gentle goddess, prompt to shower

Her blessings on some favoured head.

I know her now, the prophetess of ill,

And vengeance ratifies each word,
The votive fury, fiend abhorred
The father's curses to fulfil,
Dreadful she comes, and with her brings
The brood of fate, that laps the blood of kings.

The rude barbarian, from the mines
Of Scythia, o'er the lots presides ;
Ruthless to each his share assigns,
And the contested realm divides :
To each allots no wider a domain
Than, on the cold earth as they lie,
Their breathless bodies occupy,
Regardless of an ampler reign.
Such narrow compass does the sword,
A cruel umpire, their high claims afford.

Conflicting thus in furious mood,
Should each by other's hand be slain ;
Should the black fountain of their blood
Spout forth, and drench the thirsty plain ;
Who shall the solemn expiation pay ;
Who with pure lavers cleanse the dead ;
Miseries to miseries thus succeed,
And vengeance marks this house her prey,
Swift to chastise the first ill deed ;
And the son's sons in her deep fury bleed.

The first ill deed from Laius sprung :
Thrice from his shrine these words of fate
Awful the Pythian Phœbus sung,
" Die childless, wouldst thou save the State."
Urged by his friends, as round the free wine flows,
To love's forbidden rites he flies.
By the son's hand the father dies,
He in the chaste ground, whence he arose,

Was bold t' implant the deadly root ;
And madness reared each baleful-spreading shoot.

Wide o'er misfortune's surging tide
Billows succeeding billows spread ;
Should one, its fury spent, subside,
Another lifts its boist'rous head,
And foams around the city's shattered prow.
But should the rough tempestuous wave
Force through our walls too slight to save
And lay the thin partition low,
Will not the flood's resistless sway
Sweep kings and people, town and realms away ?

The dreadful curse pronounced of old
To vengeance rouses ruthless hate ;
And slaughter, ranging uncontrolled,
Pursues the hideous work of fate.
Wrecked in the storm the great, the brave, the wise
Are sunk beneath the roaring tide.
Such was the chief, this city's pride,
Dear to each god in yon bright skies,
Whose prudence took our dread away,
The rav'ning monster gorged with human prey.

Where now the chief ? His glories where ?
Fall'n, fall'n. From the polluted bed
Indignant madness, wild despair,
And agonizing grief succeed.
The light of heaven, himself, his sons abhorred,
Darkling he feeds his gloomy rage,
Bids them, with many a curse, engage,
And part their empire with the sword.
That curse now holds its unmoved state,
The furious fiend charged with the work of fate.

SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOLDIER. Have comfort, virgins, your fond parents' joy ;
The city hath escaped the servile yoke,
And the proud vaunts of these impetuous men
Are fall'n ; the storm is ceased, and the rough waves
That threatened to o'erwhelm us, are subsided.
Our towers stand firm, each well-appointed chief
Guarded his charge with manly fortitude.
All at six gates is well ; but at the seventh
The god, to whom that mystic number's sacred,
Royal Apollo, took his awful stand,
Repaying on the race of Œdipus
The ill-advised transgression of old Laius.

CHOR. What new affliction hath befallen the city ?

SOL. The city is preserved : the brother kings
Are fallen, each slaughtered by the other's hand.

CHOR. Who ? What ? Thy words distract my sense with
fear.

SOL. Be calm, and hear. The sons of Œdipus.

CHOR. Ah me ! I am the prophetess of ill.

SOL. It is indeed too certain : both are dead.

CHOR. Came they to this ? 'Tis horrible ; yet tell me.

SOL. Brother by brother's hands dreadfully slain.

CHOR. And has one common fate involved them both ?

SOL. It has indeed destroyed th' unhappy race.

Here then is cause for lamentation, cause
For joy : joy, that the city stands secure ;
But lamentation, that the chiefs are fall'n.
To both the rigid steel, forged in the mines
Of Scythia, shares their whole inheritance ;
And each receives but that small tract of earth,
Which serves him for a tomb ; their father's curse,
Fatally cruel, sweeps them both away.

The city is preserved ; but the dust drinks
The blood of the brothers, each by th' other slain.

CHORUS

Monostrophe.

O Jove supreme,
And all ye gods that guard this State,
Should I the joyful Pæan raise,
And celebrate your praise ?
Your guardian care, propitious powers,
Preserved our walls, preserved our towers !
Or bid the solemn, doleful strain
Lament the chiefs, the brothers slain ;
A mournful theme ;
Through mad ambition's impious pride
Childless, unblest, in youth's warm tide
Fallen, fallen by too severe a fate ?

Strophe.

Thou gloomy curse, too prompt to ill,
A father's vengeance to fulfil,
I feel, I feel thee in my shiv'ring breast !
Soon as I heard th' unhappy slain
Lay weltring on th' ensanguined plain,
With inspiration's raging power possest,
I formed the funeral strains to flow
With all the melody of woe.

Antistrophe.

Thou fell, ill-omened, cruel spear,
Couldst thou the father's curses hear,
And winged with fury drink the brothers' gore ?
Now, Laius, boast the frantic deed ;
Thy disobedience has its meed ;
The fatal oracle delays no more.

These are your works ; and round them stand
Horrors, and death's avenging band.

Epode.

Is this a tale of fear-created woe?
In very deed before our eyes—
[*The dead bodies of ETEOCLES and POLYNICES
are here brought on the stage.*

A twofold scene of misery lies,
And from a double slaughter double horrors flow ;
Whilst grief on grief, and groan on groan
Rush in, and make this house their own.
Come then, ye virgins, form the mournful bands,
To wail the mighty slain ;
And ever and anon, at each sad pause
The dying cadence draws
Together smite your high-raised hands,
The sullen sound attempered to the strain,
That with many a dismal note
Accompanies the sable boat,
Slow as its sails on Acheron's dull stream,
Wafting its joyless numbers o'er
To that unlovely, dreary shore,
Which Phœbus never views, nor the light's golden beam.

1st SEMICHOR. But see, to aid this mournful office come
Antigone and Ismene : they be sure
Will, from their lovely gentleness of soul,
Pour for their brothers' loss their sorrows wild.
Behoves us then, ere the sad tale shall reach
Their ear, with meet solemnity to raise
The thrilling strain, and chant the hymn of death.

2nd SEMICHOR. Unhappy in your brothers, most un-
happy
Of all that o'er their swelling bosoms bind

The decent vest, I weep, I breathe the sigh
Warm from my heart, that feels for your afflictions.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

1st SEMICHORUS. Ah ! what frantic rage possesseth
Each unyielding, ruthless breast,
Wisdom scorned, and friends defied
By threat'ning ills unterrified,
'Gainst their father's house to bear,
Wretched they, the fatal spear !

2nd SEMICHOR. Wretched they a wretched death
Found their house's fall beneath.

1st SEMICHOR. Each the ruined palace o'er
Strove t' extend his envied power :
Each unrivalled and alone
Proudly strove to seize the throne.
But the sword their contest ends,
Not the lovely strife of friends.
Hate, that never knows remorse,
Fury of the father's curse,
Through their sides with horrid sway
Urged the sharp steel's purple way.

2nd SEMICHOR. Charged with death thou cruel curse,
Each hath felt thy fatal force.

1st SEMICHOR. Brother pierced by brother dies,
Low their house in ruin lies,

2nd SEMICHOR. From the father's furious breath
Discord rose, and rage, and death.

1st SEMICHOR. Grief with wild distracted air,
Through the city leads despair ;
The towers on high, the vales below,
Sigh the sullen notes of woe.
To other lords the large domains,
And the envied power remains ;

Of the territories wide,
For which they fought, for which they died,
Each receives an equal share,
Fiercely parted by the spear :
Cruel arbiter of fate,
Friends thy rude decisions hate.

2nd SEMICHOR. Pierced with steel each finds his end :
Pierced with steel they haste t' attend
Their fathers, by like bloody death,
In the yawning grave beneath.

1st SEMICHOR. Grief that rends the tortured breast,
Deep with real woes possest,
Tears fast streaming from her eyes
From the haunts of pleasure flies,
Anguish, misery all her own,
Sadly pours the hollow groan ;
Whilst the ruined palace round
Echo answers to the sound ;
And, each frightful pause between,
From her airy shell unseen,
Listens to the funeral strain,
Wailing the unhappy slain ;
Wailing all the dreadful woes
That from madding discord rose ;
Many a friend among the dead,
Whilst the hostile legions bleed.

2nd SEMICHOR. Far beyond each sorrowing dame,
Each that bears a mother's name,
Each that groans upon the earth,
Hapless she that gave them birth.
She, to share her bed and throne,
As a husband took her son :
These she bore, and this their fate,
Brother slain by brother's hate.

ISM. Brothers they, by birth allied,
 Spread the mutual carnage wide :
 Unfriendly each to other's life,
 In the madding rage of strife.
 But their hatred is no more,
 On the earth, all stained with gore,
 Their stream of life unites, and shows
 From one common source it rose.

CHOR. Umpire of the strife of kings,
 Forth the barb'rous stranger springs :
 Ruthless issuing from the flame
 O'er the seas the keen steel came.
 Ruthless came the realm to share,
 Big with mischief, wasting war,
 And accursed, without remorse,
 Executes a father's curse.

ANT. They have the wretched share they chose,
 Share of heaven-appointed woes :
 And the rich, contested prize
 Deep beneath earth's bosom lies.

ISM. It falls, the royal house, it falls ;
 Ruin lords it o'er its walls ;
 And the Furies howl around,
 Notes of shrill, soul-piercing sound.
 Slaughter, reeking yet with gore,
 Raises high each gate before,
 Where they fought, and where they bled,
 Trophies of the mighty dead ;
 And, the rival chiefs subdued,
 Ceases from her work of blood.

ANT. Wounded thou gav'st the fatal wound.

ISM. Dying, thy hand its vengeance found.

ANT. By the spear 'twas thine to kill.

ISM. And the spear's thy blood to spill.

ANT. Fierce thy thought, and fell thy deed.

ISM. Fierce recoiled it on thy head.

ANT. Flow my tears.

ISM. My sorrows flow.

ANT. He that slew shall lie as low.

Madness mingles with my moans.

ISM. Heaves my heart, and bursts with groans.

ANT. Thou shalt claim the ceaseless tear.

ISM. To my soul wast thou most dear.

ANT. Thee thy friend stretched on the plain.

ISM. And by thee thy friend is slain.

ANT. Twice to see.

ISM. And twice to tell.

ANT. Near us do these sorrows dwell.

ISM. Near us dwell these sorrows, near

As to sisters brothers are.

ANT. Fate, in all thy terrors clad,

Œdipus, thy awful shade,

Erinnys, frowning black as night,

Dreadful, dreadful is your might!

ISM. Fierce from flight achieved he deeds,

At which my heart with anguish bleeds.

ANT. Nor is he returned that slew.

ISM. Safe himself, on death he flew.

ANT. Death upon himself he brought.

ISM. And to him destruction wrought.

ANT. Sprung from an unhappy line.

ISM. In one unhappy fate they join.

ANT. Mournful, threefold misery.

ISM. Sad to tell.

ANT. And sad to see.

Fate in all thy terrors clad,

Œdipus, thy awful shade,

Erinnys, frowning black as night,

Dreadful, dreadful is your might !

Thou their power hast past, hast known.

ISM. Soon this knowledge was thy own.

ANT. To the town advancing near.

ISM. Lifting high thy purple spear,
Burning fierce with enmity.

ANT. Sad to tell.

ISM. And sad to see.

ANT. Ah, what woes on us await !

ISM. And our house oppressed with fate ;
Through the land the evils spread,
Falling heaviest on my head.

ANT. I th' afflicting burden share,
Equal sorrow, equal care.

ISM. Eteocles, from thee it flows,
Author of these mournful woes.

ANT. Each the gushing tear demands.

ISM. Each with frenzy armed his hands.

ANT. Where shall we with pious care
The sepulchral earth prepare ?

ISM. Where the hallowed ground shall spread
Awful honours o'er the dead.

ANT. Their unhappy father nigh
Let the mournful ruins lie.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS, HERALD.

HERALD. My office leads me to proclaim the mandate
Of the great rulers of the Theban State.
Eteocles, for that he loved his country,
They have decreed with honour to inter.
To shield her from her foes he fought, he fell,
Her sacred rites revered, unstained with blame.
Where glory calls the valiant youth to bleed,

He bled. Thus far of him am I bid say.
 Of Polynices, that his corpse shall lie
 Cast out unburied, to the dogs a prey ;
 Because his spear, had not the gods opposed,
 Threatened destruction to the lands of Thebes.
 In death the vengeance of his country's gods
 Pursues him, for he scorned them, and presumed
 To lead a foreign host, and storm the town.
 Be this then his reward, to lie exposed
 To rav'nous birds, unhonoured, of the rites
 That grace the dead, libations at the tomb,
 The solemn strain, that 'midst the exequies
 Breathes from the friendly voice of woe, deprived.
 These are the mandates of the Theban rulers.

ANT. And to these Theban rulers I declare,
 If none besides dare bury him, myself
 Will do that office, heedless of the danger,
 And think no shame to disobey the State,
 Paying the last sad duties to a brother.
 Nature has tender ties, and strongly joins
 The offspring of the same unhappy mother,
 And the same wretched father. In this task
 Shrink not, my soul, to share the ills he suffered,
 Involuntary ills ; and whilst life warms
 This breast, be bold to show a sister's love
 To a dead brother. Shall the famished wolves
 Fatten on him? Away with such a thought.
 I though a woman, will prepare his tomb,
 Dig up the earth, and bear it in this bosom,
 In these fine folds to cover him. Go to.
 I will not be opposed. Fruitful invention
 Shall devise means to execute the task.

HER. I charge thee not t' offend the State in this.

ANT. I charge thee waste not words on me in vain.

HER. Rage soon inflames a people freed from danger.

ANT. In flame them thou, he shall not lie unburied.

HER. Wilt thou thus grace the object of their hate?

ANT. Long have they strove to load him with dishonour.

HER. Not till he shook this land with hostile arms.

ANT. Great were his wrongs, and greatly he revenged them.

HER. Injured by one, his vengeance burst on all.

ANT. Discord, the meanest of the gods, will do
What she resolves ; spare then thy tedious speech,
And be assured that I will bury him.

HER. Self-willed, and unadvised ! I must declare this.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

1st SEMICHORUS. With what a ruthless and destructive
rage

The Furies hurl their vengeful shafts around,

And desolate the house of *Cedipus* !

What then remains for me ? and how resolve ?

Can I forbear to mourn thee, to attend thee

To the sad tomb ? Yet duty to the State,

And reverence to its mandates, awes my soul.

Thou shalt have many to lament thy fall :

Whilst he, unwept, unpitied, unattended,

Save by a sister's solitary sorrows,

Sinks to the shades. Approve you this resolve ?

2nd SEMICHOR. To those that wail the fate of Poly-
nices,

Let the State act its pleasure. We will go

Attend his funeral rites, and aid his sister

To place him in the earth. Such sorrows move

The common feelings of humanity ;

And, where the deed is just, the State approves it.

1st SEMICHOR. And we with him, as justice and the
State

Concur to call us. Next th' immortal gods,
And Jove's high power, this valiant youth came forth
The guardian of his country, and repelled
Th' assault of foreign foes, whose raging force
Rushed like a torrent threat'ning to o'erwhelm us.

AGAMEMNON.

IN this tragedy the reader will find the strongest traces of the genius of Æschylus, and the most distinguishing proofs of his skill. Great in his conceptions, bold and daring in his metaphors, strong in his passions, he here touches the heart with uncommon emotions. The odes are particularly sublime, and the oracular spirit that breathes through them, adds a wonderful elevation and dignity to them. Short as the part of Agamemnon is, the poet has the address to throw such an amiable dignity around him that we soon become interested in his favour, and are predisposed to lament his fate. The character of Clytemnestra is finely marked; a high-spirited, artful, close, determined, dangerous woman. But the poet has nowhere exerted such efforts of his genius, as in the scene where Cassandra appears: as a prophetess, she gives every mark of the divine inspiration, from the dark and distant hint, through all the noble imagery of the prophetic enthusiasm; till, as the catastrophe advances, she more and more plainly declares it: as a suffering princess, her grief is plaintive, lively, and piercing; yet she goes to meet her death, which she clearly foretells, with a firmness worthy the daughter of Priam and the sister of Hector: nothing can be more animated or more interesting than this scene. The conduct

of the poet through this play is exquisitely judicious; every scene gives us some obscure hint, or ominous presage, enough to keep our attention always raised, and to prepare us for the event; even the studied caution of Clytemnestra is finely managed to produce that effect; whilst the secrecy with which she conducts her design, keeps us in suspense, and prevents a discovery till we hear the dying groans of her murdered husband.

It is to be lamented that a late amiable poet, in his tragedy on this subject, which, too, he wished to have esteemed as classical, should have deviated so far from his great original, particularly in the character of Clytemnestra: but as he wanted strength of genius to imitate the noble simplicity of Æschylus, his taste led him to take Seneca for his model, and he has succeeded accordingly.

The scene of this play is at Argos, before the palace of Agamemnon.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

WATCHMAN.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

HERALD.

AGAMEMNON.

CASSANDRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

CHORUS OF ARGIVE SENATORS.

THE WATCHMAN.

YE fav'ring gods, relieve me from this toil:
 Fixed, as a dog, on Agamemnon's roof
 I watch the live-long year, observing hence
 The host of stars, that in the spangled skies
 Take their bright stations, and to mortals bring
 Winter and summer; radiant rulers, when
 They set, or rising, glitter through the night.

Here now I watch, if haply I may see
 The blazing torch, whose flame bring news from Troy,
 The signal of its ruin: these high hopes
 My royal mistress, thinking on her lord
 Feeds in her heart. Meanwhile the dews of night
 Fall on my couch, unvisited by dreams;
 For fear, lest sleep should close my eyes, repels
 The soft intruder. When my spirits prompt me
 To raise the song, or hum the sullen notes
 Preventing slumber, then I sigh, and wail
 The state of this unhappy house, no more
 Well-ordered as of old. But may my toils
 Be happily relieved! Blaze, thou bright flame,
 Herald of joy, blaze through the gloomy shades—
 And it does blaze. Hail, thou auspicious flame,
 That streaming through the night denouncest joy,
 Welcomed with many a festal dance in Argos!
 In the queen's ear I'll holloa this, and rouse her
 From her soft couch with speed, that she may teach
 The royal dome to echo with the strains
 Of choral warblings greeting this blest fire,
 Bright sign that Troy is taken. Nor shall I
 Forbear the prelude to the dance before her:
 For by this watch, so prosperously concluded,
 I to my masters shall assure good fortune.
 Shall I then see my king returned, once more
 To grace this house? and shall this hand once more
 Hang on his friendly hand? I could unfold
 A tale. But, hush; my tongue is chained: these walls,
 Could they but speak, would make discoveries.
 There are who know this; and to them this hint
 Were plain: to those, that know it not, mysterious.

CHOR. The tenth slow year rolls on, since great in arms
 The noble sons of Atreus, each exalted

To majesty and empire, royal brothers,
Led hence a thousand ships, the Argive fleet,
Big with the fate of Priam and of Troy ;
A warlike preparation ; their bold breasts
Breathing heroic ardour to high deeds ;
Like vultures, which, their unplumed offspring lost,
Whirl many a rapid flight, for that their toil
To guard their young was vain : till some high power,
For they are dear to Phœbus, dear to Pan,
And Jove, with pity hears their shrill-voiced grief,
And sends, though late, the fury to avenge
Their plundered nests on the unpitying spoilers.
So now the power of hospitable Jove
Arms against Paris, for th' oft-wedded dame,
The sons of Atreus, bent to plunge the hosts
Of Greece and Troy in all the toils, that sink
The body down, the firm knee bowed in dust,
And the strong spear, ere conquest crowns their helms,
Shivered in battle. These are what they are,
And fate directs th' event : nor the bent knee,
Libation pure, or supplicating tear,
Can soothe the stern rage of those merciless powers
In whose cold shrine no hallowed flame ascends.
But we, our age-enfeebled limbs unfit
For martial toils, inglorious here remain,
The staff supporting our weak steps, like children :
For as the infant years have not attained
The military vigour, withered age
Crawls through the streets like helpless infancy,
And passes as a day-dream. But what tidings,
What circumstances of fair event hath reached
Thy royal ears, daughter of Tyndarus,
Inducing thee to send the victims round ?
The shrines of all the gods, whose guardian cares

Watch o'er this State, be they enthroned in heaven,
Or rule beneath the earth, blaze with thy presents;
And from th' imperial dome a lengthened line
Of torches shoot their lustre to the skies.
O tell me what is fit for me to know,
And prudence suffers to be told : speak peace
To this anxiety, which one while swells
Presaging ill, and one while from the victims
Catches a gleam of hope, whose cheering ray
Breaks through the gloom that darkens o'er my soul.

Strophe.

It swells upon my soul : I feel the power
To hail th' auspicious hour,
When, their brave hosts marching in firm array,
The heroes led the way.
The fire of youth glows in each vein,
And heaven-born confidence inspires the strain.
Pleased the omen to record,
That to Troy's ill-fated strand
Led each monarch, mighty lord,
Led the bold confederate band,
The strong spear quiv'ring in their vengeful hand.
Full in each royal chieftain's view,
A royal eagle whirls his flight ;
In plumage one of dusky hue,
And one his dark wings edged with white ;
Swift to th' imperial mansion take their way,
And in their armed talons bear,
Seized in its flight, a pregnant hare,
And in those splendid seats enjoy their prey.

Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,
Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

Antistrophe.

The venerable seer, whose skill divine
 Knows what the Fates design,
 On each bold chief, that for the battle burns,
 His glowing eyeball turns ;
 And thus in high prophetic strains
 The rav'ning eagles and their prey explains :
 " Priam's haughty town shall fall,
 Slow they roll, the destined hours,
 Fate and fury shake her wall,
 Vengeance wide the ruin pours,
 And conquest seizes all her treasured stores.
 Ah, may no storm from th' angry sky
 Burst dreadful o'er this martial train,
 Nor check their ardour, flaming high
 To pour the war o'er Troy's proud plain !
 Wrath kindles in the chaste Diana's breast :
 Gorged with the pregnant mother's blood,
 And, ere the birth, her hapless brood,
 Hell-hounds of Jove, she hates your horrid feast.
 Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

Epode.

 " The virgin goddess of the chase,
 Fair from the spangled dew-drops that adorn
 The breathing flowrets of the morn,
 Protectress of the infant race
 Of all that haunt the tangled grove,
 Or o'er the rugged mountains rove,
 She, beauteous queen, commands me to declare
 What by the royal birds is shown,
 Signal of conquest, omen fair,

But darkened by her awful frown.
 God of the distant-wounding bow,
 Thee, Pæan, thee I call ; hear us, and aid ;
 Ah ! may not the offended maid
 Give the sullen gales to blow,
 Adverse to this eager train,
 And bar th' unnavigable main ;
 Nor other sacrifice demand,
 At whose barbaric rites no feast is spread ;
 But discord rears her horrid head,
 And calls around her murd'rous band :
 Leagued with hate, and fraud, and fear,
 Nor king, nor husband, they revere ;
 Indignant o'er a daughter weep,
 And burn to stamp their vengeance deep ? ”
 Prophetic thus the reverend Chalcas spoke,
 Marking th' imperial eagles' whirling wings ;
 From his rapt lips the joyful presage broke,
 Success and glory to th' embattled kings.
 Sound high the strain, th' according notes prolong,
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

Strophe 1.

O thou, that sitt'st supreme above,
 Whatever name thou deign'st to hear,
 Unblamed may I pronounce thee Jove !
 Immersed in deep and holy thought,
 If rightly I conjecture aught,
 Thy power I must revere :
 Else vainly tossed the anxious mind
 Nor truth, nor calm repose, can find.
 Feeble and helpless to the light
 The proudest of man's race arose,

Though now, exulting in his might,
 Dauntless he rushes on his foes ;
 Great as he is, in dust he lies ;
 He meets a greater, and he dies.

Antistrophe 1.

He that, when conquest brightens round,
 Swells the triumphal strain to Jove,
 Shall ever with success be crowned.
 Yet often, when to wisdom's seat
 Jove deigns to guide man's erring feet,
 His virtues to improve ;
 He to affliction gives command
 To form him with her chastening hand :
 The memory of her rigid lore,
 On the sad heart imprinted deep,
 Attends him through day's active hour,
 Nor in the night forsakes his sleep.
 Instructed thus thy grace we own,
 O thou, that sittest on Heaven's high throne !

Strophe 2.

When now in Aulis' rolling bay,
 His course the reflux floods refused,
 And sickening with inaction lay
 In dead repose th' exhausted train,
 Did the firm chief of chance complain ?
 No prophet he accused ;
 His eyes towards Chalcis bent he stood,
 And silent marked the surging flood.
 Sullen the winds from Strymon sweep,
 Mischance and famine in the blast.
 Ceaseless torment the angry deep,
 The cordage rend, the vessels waste,

With tedious and severe delay
Wear the fresh flower of Greece away.

Antistrophe 2.

When, in Diana's name, the seer
Pronounced the dreadful remedy
More than the stormy sea severe,
Each chieftain stood in grief profound,
And smote his sceptre on the ground :
Then with a rising sigh
The monarch, whilst the big tears roll,
Expressed the anguish of his soul :
" Dreadful the sentence : not t' obey,
Vengeance and ruin close us round :
Shall then the sire his daughter slay,
In youth's fresh bloom with beauty crowned ?
Shall on these hands her warm blood flow ?
Cruel alternative of woe !

Strophe 3.

" This royal fleet, this martial host,
The cause of Greece, shall I betray,
The monarch in the father lost ?
To calm these winds, to smooth this flood,
Diana's wrath a virgin's blood
Demands : 'tis ours t' obey."
Bound in necessity's iron chain
Reluctant nature strives in vain :
Impure, unholy thoughts succeed,
And darkening o'er his bosom roll ;
Whilst madness prompts the ruthless deed,
Tyrant of the misguided soul :
Stern on the fleet he rolls his eyes,
And dooms the hateful sacrifice.

Antistrophe 3.

Armed in a woman's cause, around
 Fierce for the war the princes rose ;
 No place affrighted pity found.
 In vain the virgin's streaming tear,
 Her cries in vain, her pleading prayer,
 Her agonizing woes.
 Could the fond father hear unmoved ?
 The Fates decreed : the king approved :
 Then to th' attendants gave command
 Decent her flowing robes to bind ;
 Prone on the altar with strong hand
 To place her, like a spotless hind ;
 And check her sweet voice, that no sound
 Unhallowed might the rites confound.

Epode.

Rent on the earth her maiden veil she throws,
 That emulates the rose ;
 And on the sad attendants rolling
 The trembling lustre of her dewy eyes,
 Their grief-impassioned souls controlling,
 That ennobled, modest grace,
 Which the mimic pencil tries
 In the imaged form to trace,
 The breathing picture shows :
 And as, amidst his festal pleasures,
 Her father oft rejoiced to hear
 Her voice in soft mellifluous measures
 Warble the sprightly-fancied air ;
 So now in act to speak the virgin stands :
 But when, the third libation paid,
 She heard her father's dread commands
 Enjoining silence, she obeyed :

And for her country's good,
 With patient, meek, submissive mind
 To her hard fate resigned,
 Poured out the rich stream of her blood.

What since hath past I know not, nor relate ;
 But never did the prophet speak in vain,
 Th' afflicted, anxious for his future fate,
 Looks forward, and with hope relieves his pain.

But since th' inevitable ill will come,
 Much knowledge to much misery is allied ;
 Why strive we then t' anticipate the doom,
 Which happiness and wisdom wish to hide ?

Yet let this careful, age-enfeebled band
 Breathe from our inmost soul one ardent vow,
 Now the sole guardians of this Apian land,
 " May fair success with glory bind her brow ! "

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS. With reverence, Clytemnestra, I approach
 Thy greatness ; honour due to her that fills
 The royal seat, yet vacant of its lord.
 If aught of glad import hath reached thy ear.
 Or to fair hope the victim bleeds, I wish,
 But with submission to thy will, to hear.

CLY. The joy-importing Morn springs, as they say,
 From Night, her mother. Thou shalt hear a joy
 Beyond thy hopes to hear : the town of Priam
 Is fallen beneath the conquering arms of Greece.

CHOR. What saidst thou ? Passing credence fled thy
 word.

CLY. In Troy Greece triumphs. Speak I clearly now ?

CHOR. Joy steals upon me, and calls forth the tear.

CLY. Thy glist'ning eye bespeaks an honest heart.

CHOR. Does aught of certain proof confirm these tidings?

CLY. It does. Why not? unless the gods deceive us.

CHOR. Perchance the visions of persuasive dreams.

CLY. Sport of the slumbering soul; they move not me.

CHOR. Hath then some winged rumour spread these transports?

CLY. As a raw girl's, thou holdest my judgment cheap.

CHOR. How long hath ruin crushed this haughty city?

CLY. This night, that gave this infant morning birth.

CHOR. What speed could be the herald of this news?

CLY. The fire, that from the height of Ida sent

Its streaming light, as from th' announcing flame
Torch blazed to torch. First Ida to the steep
Of Lemnos; Athos' sacred height received
The mighty splendour; from the surging back
Of the Hellespont the vigorous blaze held on
Its smiling way, and like the orient sun
Illumes with golden-gleaming rays the head
Of rocky Macetas; nor lingers there,
Nor winks unheedful, but its warning flames
Darts to the streams of Euripus, and gives
Its glittering signal to the guards that hold
Their high watch on Mesapius. These enkindle
The joy-denouncing fires, that spread the blaze
To where Erica hoar its shaggy brow
Waves rudely. Unimpaired the active flame
Bounds o'er the level of Asopus, like
The jocund moon, and on Cithæron's steep
Wakes a successive flame; the distant watch
Agnize its shine, and raise a brighter fire,
That o'er the lake Gorgopis streaming holds

Its rapid course, and on the mountainous heights
 Of Ægiplanctus huge, swift-shooting spreads
 The lengthened line of light. Thence onwards waves
 Its fiery tresses, eager to ascend
 The crags of Prone, frowning in their pride
 O'er the Saronic gulf: it leaps, it mounts
 The summit of Arachne, whose high head
 Looks down on Argos: to this royal seat
 Thence darts the light that from th' Idæan fire
 Derives its birth. Rightly in order thus
 Each to the next consigns the torch, and fills
 The bright succession, whilst the first in speed
 Vies with the last: the promised signal this
 Given by my lord t' announce the fall of Troy.

CHOR. Anon my grateful praise shall rise to Heaven:
 Now, lady, would I willingly attend
 Through each glad circumstance the wond'rous tale.

CLY. This day the conquering Greeks are lords of Troy.
 Methinks I hear the various clamours rise
 Discordant through the city. Pour thou oil
 In the same vase and vinegar, in vain
 Wouldst thou persuade th' unsocial streams to mix:
 The captives' and the conqueror's voice distinct,
 Marks of their different fortune, mayst thou hear:
 Those rolling on the bodies of the slain,
 Friends, husbands, brothers, fathers; the weak arms
 Of children clasped around the bleeding limbs
 Of hoary age, lament their fall, their necks
 Bent to the yoke of slavery: eager these
 From the fierce toils of war, who through the gloom
 Of night ranged wide, fly on the spoils, as chance,
 Not order, leads them; in the Trojan houses,
 Won by their spears, they walk at large, relieved
 From the cold dews dropt from th' unsheltered sky;

And at th' approach of eve, like those whose power
 Commands security, the easy night
 Shall sleep unguarded. If with hallowed rites
 They venerate the gods that o'er the city,
 With those that o'er the vanquished country rule,
 And reverence their shrines, the conquering troops
 Shall not be conquered. May no base desire,
 No guilty wish urge them, enthralled to gain,
 To break through sacred laws. Behoves them now,
 With safety in their train, backward to plough
 The reflux wave. Should they return exposed
 To th' anger of the gods, vengeance would wake
 To seize its prey, might they perchance escape
 Life's incidental ills. From me thou hearest
 A woman's sentiment ; and much I wish,
 Their glories by no rude mischance depressed,
 To cull from many blessings the most precious.

CHOR. With manly sentiment thy wisdom, lady,
 Speaks well. Confiding in thy suasive signs,
 Prepare we to address the gods ; our strains
 Shall not without their meed of honour rise.

Prosode.

Supreme of kings, Jove ; and thou, friendly night,
 That wide o'er Heaven's star-spangled plain
 Holdest thy awful reign,
 Thou, that with resistless might
 O'er Troy's proud towers, and destined state,
 Hast thrown the secret net of fate,
 In whose enormous sweep the young, the old,
 Without distinction rolled,
 Are with unsparing fury dragged away
 To slavery and woe a prey :
 Thee, hospitable Jove, whose vengeful power

These terrors o'er the foe has spread,
Thy bow long bent at Paris' head,
Whose arrows know their time to fly,
Not hurtling aimless in the sky,
Our pious strains adore.

Strophe 1.

The hand of Jove will they not own ;
And, as his marks they trace,
Confess he willed, and it was done ?
Who now of earth-born race
Shall dare contend that his high power
Deigns not with eye severe to view
The wretch that tramples on his law ?
Hence with this impious lore :
Learn that the sons accursed shall rue
The madly daring father's pride,
That furious drew th' unrighteous sword,
High in his house the rich spoils stored,
And the avenging gods defied.
But be it mine to draw
From wisdom's fount, pure as it flows,
That calm of soul which virtue only knows.
For vain the shield that wealth shall spread,
To guard the proud oppressor's head,
Who dares the rites of justice to confound,
And spurn her altars to the ground.

Antistrophe 1.

But suasive is the voice of vice,
That spreads th' insidious snare ;
She, not concealed, through her disguise
Emits a livid glare.

Her votary, like adult'rate brass
 Unfaithful to its use, unsound,
 Proves the dark baseness of his soul ;
 Fond as a boy to chase
 The winged bird light-flitting round,
 And bent on his pernicious play
 Draws desolation on his state.
 His vows no god regards, when fate
 In vengeance sweeps the wretch away.
 With base intent and foul,
 Each hospitable law defied,
 From Sparta's king thus Paris stole his bride.
 To Greece she left the shield, the spear,
 The naval armament of war ;
 And, bold in ill, to Troy's devoted shore
 Destruction for her dowry bore.

Strophe 2.

When through the gates her easy way
 She took, his pensive breast
 Each prophet smote in deep dismay,
 And thus his grief exprest :
 " What woes this royal mansion threat,
 This mansion, and its mighty lord ?
 Where now the chaste connubial bed ?
 The traces of her feet,
 By love to her blest consort led,
 Where now ? Ah ! silent, see, she stands ;
 Each glowing tint, each radiant grace,
 That charm th' enraptured eye, we trace ;
 And still the blooming form commands,
 Still honoured, still adored,
 Though careless of her former loves
 Far o'er the rolling sea the wanton roves :

The husband, with a bursting sigh,
 Turns from the pictured fair his eye ;
 Whilst love, by absence fed, without control
 Tumultuous rushes on his soul.

Antistrophe 2.

“ Oft as short slumbers close his eyes,
 His sad soul soothed to rest,
 The dream-created visions rise,
 With all her charms imprest :
 But vain th’ ideal scene, that smiles
 With rapturous love and warm delight ;
 Vain his fond hopes : his eager arms
 The fleeting form beguiles,
 On sleep’s quick pinions passing light.”
 Such griefs, and more severe than these,
 Their sad gloom o’er the palace spread ;
 Thence stretch their melancholy shade,
 And darken o’er the realms of Greece.
 Struck with no false alarms
 Each house its home-felt sorrow knows,
 Each bleeding heart is pierced with keenest woes ;
 When for the hero, sent to share
 The glories of the crimson war,
 Nought, save his arms stained with their master’s gore,
 And his cold ashes reach the shore.

Strophe 3.

Thus in the dire exchange of war
 Does Mars the balance hold ;
 Helms are the scale, the beam a spear,
 And blood is weighed for gold.
 Thus, for the warrior, to his friends
 His sad remains, a poor return,

Saved from the sullen fire that rose
 On Troy's cursed shore, he sends,
 Placed decent in the mournful urn.
 With many a tear their dead they weep,
 Their names with many a praise resound ;
 One for his skill in arms renowned ;
 One, that amidst the slaughtered heap
 Of fierce-conflicting foes
 Glorious in beauty's cause he fell :
 Yet 'gainst th' avenging chiefs their murmurs swell
 In silence. Some in youth's fresh bloom
 Beneath 'Troy's towers possess a tomb ;
 Their bodies buried on the distant strand,
 Seizing in death the hostile land.

Antistrophe 3.

How dreadful, when the people raise
 Loud murmurs mixed with hate !
 Yet this the tribute greatness pays
 For its exalted state.
 E'en now some dark and horrid deed
 By my presaging soul is feared ;
 For never with unheeding eyes,
 When slaughtered thousands bleed,
 Did the just powers of Heaven regard
 The carnage of th' ensanguined plain.
 The ruthless and oppressive power
 May triumph for its little hour ;
 Full soon with all their vengeful train
 The sullen Furies rise,
 Break his fell force, and whirl him down
 Through life's dark paths, unpitied, and unknown.
 And dangerous is the pride of fame,
 Like the red lightning's dazzling flame.

Nor envied wealth, nor conquest let me gain,
Nor drag the conqueror's hateful chain.

Epode.

But from these fires far streaming through the night
Fame through the town her progress takes,
And rapt'rous joy awakes ;
If with truth's auspicious light
They shine, who knows? Her sacred reign
Nor fraud, nor falsehood, dares profane.
But who, in wisdom's school so lightly taught,
Suffers his ardent thought
From these informing flames to catch the fire,
Full soon perchance in grief t' expire?
Yet when a woman holds the sovereign sway,
Obsequious wisdom learns to bow,
And hails the joy it does not know ;
Though, as the glitt'ring visions roll
Before her easy, credulous soul,
Their glories fade away.

CLY. Whether these fires, that with successive signals
Blaze through the night, be true, or like a dream
Play with a sweet delusion on the soul,
Soon shall we know. A herald from the shore
I see ; branches of olive shade his brows.
That cloud of dust, raised by his speed, assures me
That neither speechless, nor enkindling flames
Along the mountains, will he signify
His message ; but his tongue shall greet our ears
With words of joy : far from my soul the thought
Of other, than confirm these fav'ring signals.

CHOR. May he, that to this State shall form a wish
Of other aim, on his own head receive it.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS, HERALD.

HERALD. Hail, thou paternal soil of Argive earth !
In the fair light of the tenth year to thee
Returned, from the sad wreck of many hopes
This one I save ; saved from despair e'en this ;
For never thought I in this honoured earth
To share in death the portion of a tomb.
Hail then, loved earth ; hail, thou bright sun ; and thou,
Great guardian of my country, supreme Jove ;
Thou, Pythian king, thy shafts no longer winged
For our destruction ; on Scamander's banks
Enough we mourned thy wrath ; propitious now
Come, king Apollo, our defence. And all
Ye gods, that o'er the works of war preside,
I now invoke ; thee, Mercury, my avenger,
Revered by heralds, that from thee derive
Their high employ ; you heroes, to the war
That sent us, friendly now receive our troops,
The relics of the spear. Imperial walls,
Mansion of kings, ye seats revered ; ye gods,
That to the golden sun before these gates
Present your honoured forms ; if e'er of old
Those eyes with favour have beheld the king,
Receive him now, after this length of time,
With glory ; for he comes, and with him brings
To you, and all, a light that cheers this gloom :
Then greet him well ; such honour is his meed.
The mighty king, that with the mace of Jove
'Th' avenger, wherewith he subdues the earth,
Hath levelled with the dust the towers of Troy ;
Their altars are o'erturned, their sacred shrines,
And all the race destroyed. This iron yoke
Fixed on the neck of Troy, victorious comes

The great Atrides, of all mortal men
 Worthy of highest honours. Paris now,
 And the perfidious State, shall boast no more
 His proud deeds unrevenge'd ; stript of his spoils,
 The debt of justice for his thefts, his rapines,
 Paid amply, o'er his father's house he spreads
 With twofold loss the wide-involving ruin.

CLY. Joy to thee, herald of the Argive host.

HER. For joy like this death were a cheap exchange.

CLY. Strong thy affection to thy native soil.

HER. So strong, the tear of joy starts from my eye.

CLY. What, hath this sweet infection reached e'en you?

HER. Beyond the power of language have I felt it.

CLY. The fond desire of those, whose equal love——

HER. This of the army say'st thou, whose warm love
 Streams to this land? Is this thy fond desire?

CLY. Such that I oft have breathed the secret sigh.

HER. Whence did the army cause this anxious sadness?

CLY. Silence I long have held a healing balm.

HER. The princes absent, hadst thou whom to fear?

CLY. To use thy words, death were a wished exchange.

HER. Well is the conflict ended. In the tide
 Of so long time, if 'midst the easy flow
 Of wished events some tyrannous blast assail us,
 What marvel? Who, save the blest gods, can claim
 Through life's whole course an unmixed happiness?
 Should I relate our toils, our wretched plight
 Wedged in our narrow ill-provided cabins,
 Each irksome hour was loaded with fatigues.
 Yet these were slight assays to those worse hardships
 We suffered on the shore: our lodging near
 The walls of the enemy, the dews of heaven
 Fell on us from above, the damps beneath
 From the moist marsh annoyed us, shrouded ill

In shaggy cov'rings. Or should one relate
The winter's keen blasts, which from Ida's snows
Breathe froze, that, pierced through all their plumes, the
birds

Shiver and die ; or th' extreme heat that scalds,
When in his midday caves the sea reclines,
And not a breeze disturbs his calm repose.
But why lament these sufferings? They are past;
Past to the dead indeed ; they lie, no more
Anxious to rise. What then avails to count
Those whom the wasteful war hath swept away,
And with their loss afflict the living? Rather
Bid we farewell to misery : in our scale,
Who haply of the Grecian host remain,
The good preponderates, and in counterpoise
Our loss is light ; and, after all our toils
By sea and land, before yon golden sun
It is our glorious privilege to boast,
" At length from vanquished Troy our warlike troops
Have to the gods of Greece brought home these spoils,
And in their temples, to record our conquests,
Fixed these proud trophies." Those that hear this boast
It well becomes to gratulate the State,
And the brave chiefs ; revering Jove's high power
That grace our conquering arms. Thou hast my message.

CHOR. Thy words convince me ; all my doubts are
vanished :

But scrupulous inquiry grows with age.
On Clytemnestra and her house this charge,
Blessing e'en me with the rich joy, devolves.

CLV. Long since my voice raised high each note of
joy,
When through the night the streaming blaze first came,
And told us Troy was taken : not unblamed

That, as a woman lightly credulous,
I let a mountain fire transport my soul
With the fond hope that Ilion's haughty towers
Were humbled in the dust. At this rebuke,
Though somewhat shaken, yet I sacrificed ;
And, as weak woman wont, one voice of joy
Awoke another, till the city rang
Through all its streets ; and at the hallowed shrines
Each raised the pious strains of gratitude,
And fanned the altar's incense-breathing flame.
But it is needless to detain thee longer,
Soon from the king's own lips shall I learn all.
How best I may receive my honoured lord,
And grace his wished return, now claims my speed.
Can Heaven's fair beam show a fond wife a sight
More grateful than her husband from his wars
Returned with glory, when she opes the gate,
And springs to welcome him? Tell my lord this,
That he may hasten his desired return :
And tell him he will find his faithful wife,
Such as he left her, a domestic creature,
To him all fondness, to his enemies
Irreconcilable ; and tell him too
That ten long years have not effaced the seal
Of constancy ; that never knew I pleasure
In the blamed converse of another man,
More than the virgin metal in the mines
Knows an adulterate and debasing mixture.

HER. This high boast, lady, sanctified by truth,
Is not unseemly in thy princely rank.

HERALD, CHORUS.

CHORUS. This, for thy information, hath she spoken
With dignity and truth. Now tell me, herald,

Of Sparta's king wish I to question thee,
The pride of Greece : returns he safe with you ?

HER. Never can I esteem a falsehood honest,
Though my friends long enjoy the sweet delusion.

CHOR. What then if thou relate an honest truth ?
From this distinction the conjecture's easy.

HER. Him from the Grecian fleet our eyes have lost,
The hero and his ship. This is the truth.

CHOR. Chanced this when in your sight he weighed from
Or in a storm that rent him from the fleet ? [Troy ;

HER. Rightly is thy conjecture aimed, in brief
Touching the long recital of our loss.

CHOR. How deemed the other mariners of this ;
That the ship perished or rode out the storm ?

HER. Who, save yon sun, the regent of the earth,
Can give a clear and certain information ?

CHOR. How saidst thou then a storm, not without loss,
Winged with Heaven's fury, tossed the shattered fleet ?

HER. It is not meet, with inauspicious tongue
Spreading ill tidings, to profane a day
Sacred to festal joy : the gods require
Their pure rites undisturbed. When with a brow
Witness of woe, the messenger relates
Unwelcome news, defeats, and slaughtered armies,
The wound with general grief affects the State ;
And with particular and private sorrow
Full many a house, for many that have fall'n
Victims to Mars, who to his bloody car
Delights to yoke his terrors, sword and spear.
A pæan to the Furies would become
The bearer of such pond'rous heap of ills.
My tidings are of conquest and success,
Diffusing joy : with these glad sounds how mix
Distress, and speak of storm and angry gods ?

The powers, before most hostile, now conspired,
 Fire and the sea, in ruin reconciled :
 And in a night of tempest wild from Thrace
 In all their fury rushed the howling winds ;
 Tossed by the forceful blasts ship against ship
 In hideous conflict dashed, or disappeared,
 Driven at the boist'rous whirlwind's dreadful will ;
 But when the sun's fair light returned, we see
 Bodies of Grecians, and the wreck of ships
 Float on the chafed foam of th' Ægean sea.
 Us and our ship some god, the power of man
 Were all too weak holding the helm preserved
 Unhurt, or interceding for our safety ;
 And fortune, the deliverer, steered our course
 To shun the waves, that near the harbour's mouth
 Boil high, or break upon the rocky shore.
 Escaped th' engulfing sea, yet scarce secure
 Of our escape, through the fair day we view
 With sighs the recent sufferings of the host,
 Cov'ring the sea with wrecks. If any breathe
 This vital air, they deem us lost, as we
 Think the same ruin theirs. Fair fall th' event !
 But first and chief expect the Spartan king
 T' arrive ; if yet one ray of yon bright sun
 Beholds him living, through the care of Jove,
 Who wills not to destroy that royal race,
 Well may we hope to joy in his return.
 Having heard this, know thou hast heard the truth.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Is there to names a charm profound
 Expressive of their fates assigned,
 Mysterious potency of sound,

And truth in wondrous accord joined?
Why else this fatal name,
That Helen and destruction are the same?
Affianced in contention, led,
The spear her dowry, to the bridal bed;
With desolation in her train,
Fatal to martial hosts, to rampired towers,
From the rich fragrance of her gorgeous bowers,
Descending to the main,
She hastes to spread her flying sails,
And calls the earth-born zephyr's gales.
Whilst heroes, breathing vengeance, snatch their shields,
And trace her light oars o'er the pathless waves,
To the thick shades fresh waving o'er those fields,
Which Simois with his silver windings laves.

Antistrophe 1.

To Troy the shining mischief came;
Before her, young-eyed pleasures play;
But in the rear with steadfast aim
Grim-visaged vengeance marks his prey,
Waiting the dreadful hour
The terrors of offended Heaven to pour
On those that dared, an impious train,
The rites of hospitable Jove profane;
Nor revered that sacred song,
Whose melting strains the bride's approach declare,
As Hymen wakes the rapture breathing air.
Far other notes belong,
The voice of mirth now heard no more,
To Priam's State; its ruins o'er
Wailing instead, distress, and loud lament;
Long sorrows sprung from that unholy bed,

And many a curse in heart-felt anguish sent
On its woe-wedded Paris' hated head.

Strophe 2.

The woodman, from his thirsty lair,
Reft of his dam, a lion bore ;
Fostered his future foe with care
To mischiefs he must soon deplore :
Gentle and tame, whilst young,
Harmless he frisked the fondling babes among ;
Oft in the father's bosom lay,
Oft licked his feeding hand in fawning play ;
Till, conscious of his firmer age,
His lion-race the lordly savage shows ;
No more his youth-protecting cottage knows,
But with insatiate rage
Flies on the flocks, a baleful guest,
And riots in th' unbidden feast :
Whilst through his mangled folds the hapless swain
With horror sees th' unbounded carnage spread ;
And learns too late that from th' infernal reign
A priest of Até in his house was bred.

Antistrophe 2.

To Ilion's towers in wanton state
With speed she wings her easy way ;
Soft gales obedient round her wait,
And pant on the delighted sea.
Attendant on her side
The richest ornaments of splendid pride :
The darts, whose golden points inspire,
Shot from her eyes the flames of soft desire ;
The youthful bloom of rosy love,

That fills with ecstasy the willing soul :
With duteous zeal obey her sweet control.

But, such the doom of Jove,
Vindictive round her nuptial bed,
With threat'ning mien and footstep dread,
Rushes to Priam and his State severe,
To rend the bleeding heart his stern delight,
And from the bridal eye to force the tear,
Erinnys, rising from the realms of night.

Epode.

From ev'ry mouth we oft have heard
This saying, for its age revered :
"With joy we see our offspring rise,
And happy, who not childless dies :
But fortune, when her flow'rets blow,
Oft bears the bitter fruit of woe."
Though these saws are as truths allowed,
Thus I dare differ from the crowd :
"One base deed, with prolific power,
Like its cursed stock engenders more :
But to the just, with blooming grace
Still flourishes, a beauteous race."

The old Injustice joys to breed
Her young, instinct with villanous deed ;
The young her destined hour will find
To rush in mischief on mankind :
She too in Até's murky cell,
Brings forth the hideous child of hell,
A burden to th' offended sky,
The power of bold impiety.

But Justice bids her ray divine
E'en on the low-roofed cottage shine ;

And beams her glories on the life,
That knows not fraud, nor ruffian strife.
The gorgeous glare of gold, obtained
By foul polluted hands, disdained
She leaves, and with averted eyes
To humbler, holier mansions flies ;
And looking through the times to come
Assigns each deed its righteous doom.

CHORUS, AGAMEMNON.

CHORUS. My royal lord, by whose victorious hand
The towers of Troy are fall'n, illustrious son
Of Atreus, with what words, what reverence
Shall I address thee, not t' o'erleap the bounds
Of modest duty, nor to sink beneath
An honourable welcome? Some there are,
That form themselves to seem, more than to be,
Transgressing honesty : to him that feels
Misfortune's rugged hand, full many a tongue
Shall drop condolence, though th' unfeeling heart
Knows not the touch of sorrow ; these again
In fortune's summer gale, with the like art,
Shall dress in forced smiles th' unwilling face :
But him the penetrating eye soon marks,
That in the seemly garb of honest zeal
Attempts to clothe his meagre blandishments.
When first in Helen's cause my royal lord
Levied his host, let me not hide the truth,
Notes, other than of music, echoed wide
In loud complaints from such as deemed him rash,
And void of reason, by constraint to plant
In breast averse the martial soul, that glows
Despising death. But now their eager zeal
Streams friendly to those chiefs, whose prosp'rous valour

Is crowned with conquest. Soon then shalt thou learn,
As each supports the State, or strives to rend it
With faction, who reveres thy dignity.

AGA. To Argos first, and to my country gods,
I bow with reverence, by whose holy guidance
On Troy's proud towers I poured their righteous vengeance,
And now revisit safe my native soil.
No loud-tongued pleader heard, they judged the cause,
And in the bloody urn, without one vote
Dissentient, cast the lots that fixed the fate
Of Ilium and its sons : the other vase
Left empty, save of widowed hope. The smoke,
Rolling in dusky wreaths, shows that the town
Is fall'n ; the fiery storm yet lives, and high
The dying ashes toss rich clouds of wealth
Consumed. For this behoves us to the gods
Render our grateful thanks, and that they spread
The net of fate sweeping with angry ruin.
In beauty's cause the Argive monster reared
Its bulk enormous, to th' affrighted town
Portending devastation ; in its womb
Hiding embattled hosts, rushed furious forth,
About the setting of the Pleiades,
And, as a lion rav'ning for its prey,
Ramped o'er their walls, and lapped the blood of kings.
This to the gods addressed, I turn me now
Attentive to thy caution : I approve
Thy just remark, and with my voice confirm it.
Few have the fortitude of soul to honour
A friend's success, without a touch of envy ;
For that malignant passion to the heart
Cleaves close, and with a double burden loads
The man infected with it ; first he feels
In all their weight his own calamities,

Then sighs to see the happiness of others.
 This of my own experience have I learned ;
 And this I know, that many, who in public
 Have borne the semblance of my firmest friends,
 Are but the flatt'ring image of a shadow
 Reflected from a mirror ; save Ulysses
 Alone, who, though averse to join our arms
 Yoked in his martial harness from my side
 Swerved not ; living or dead be this his praise.
 But what concerns our kingdom and the gods,
 Holding a general council of the State,
 We will consult ; that what is well may keep
 Its goodness permanent, and what requires
 Our healing hand, with mild severity
 May be corrected. But my royal roof
 Now will I visit, and before its hearths
 Offer libations to the gods, who sent me
 To this far distant war, and led me back.
 Firm stands the victory that attends our arms.

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. Friends, fellow-citizens, whose counsels
 The State of Argos, in your reverend presence [guide
 A wife's fond love I blush not to disclose :
 Thus habit softens dread. From my full heart
 Will I recount my melancholy life
 Through the long stay of my loved lord at Troy :
 For a weak woman, in her husband's absence,
 Pensive to sit and lonely in her house,
 'Tis dismal, list'ning to each frightful tale :
 First one alarms her, then another comes
 Charged with worse tidings. Had my poor lord here
 Suffered as many wounds as common fame
 Reported, like a net, he had been pierced :

Had he been slain oft as the loud-tongued rumour
Was noised abroad, this triple-formed Geryon,
A second of the name, whilst yet alive,
For of the dead I speak not, well might boast
To have received his triple mail, to die
In each form singly. Such reports oppressed me,
Till life became distasteful, and my hands
Were prompted oft to deeds of desperation.
Nor is thy son Orestes, the dear tie
That binds us each to th' other, present here
To aid me, as he ought : nay, marvel not,
The friendly Strophius with a right strong arm
Protects him in Phocæa ; whilst his care
Saw danger threat me in a double form,
The loss of thee at Troy, the anarchy
That might ensue, should madness drive the people
To deeds of violence, as men are prompt
Insultingly to trample on the fall'n :
Such care dwells not with fraud. At thy return
The gushing fountains of my tears are dried,
Save that my eyes are weak with midnight watchings,
Straining, through tears, if haply they might see
Thy signal fires, that claimed my fixed attention.
If they were closed in sleep, a silly fly
Would, with its slightest murmurings, make me start,
And wake me to more fears. For thy dear sake
All this I suffered : but my jocund heart
Forgets it all, whilst I behold my lord,
My guardian, the strong anchor of my hope,
The stately column that supports my house,
Dear as an only child to a fond parent ;
Welcome as land, which the tossed mariner
Beyond his hope descries ; welcome as day
After a night of storms with fairer beams

Returning ; welcome as the liquid lapse
Of fountain to the thirsty traveller :
So pleasant is it to escape the chain
Of hard constraint. Such greeting I esteem
Due to thy honour : let it not offend,
For I have suffered much. But, my loved lord,
Leave now that car ; nor on the bare ground set
That royal foot, beneath whose mighty tread
Troy trembled. Haste, ye virgins, to whose care
This pleasing office is intrusted, spread
The streets with tapestry ; let the ground be covered
With richest purple, leading to the palace ;
That honour with just state may grace his entry,
Though unexpected. My attentive care
Shall, if the gods permit, dispose the rest
To welcome his high glories, as I ought.

AGA. Daughter of Leda, guardian of my house,
Thy words are correspondent to my absence,
Of no small length. With better grace my praise
Would come from others : soothe me not with strains
Of adulation, as a girl ; nor raise,
As to some proud barbaric king, that loves
Loud acclamations echoed from the mouths
Of prostrate worshippers, a clamorous welcome :
Nor spread the streets with tapestry ; 'tis invidious ;
These are the honours we should pay the gods.
For mortal man to tread on ornaments
Of rich embroidery—No : I dare not do it :
Respect me as a man, not as a god.
Why should my foot pollute these vests, that glow
With various tintured radiance ? My full fame
Swells high without it ; and the temperate rule
Of cool discretion is the choicest gift
Of favouring Heaven. Happy the man, whose life

Is spent in friendship's calm security.

These sober joys be mine, I ask no more.

CLY. Do not thou thwart the purpose of my mind.

AGA. My mind, be well assured, shall not be tainted.

CLY. Hast thou in fear made to the gods this vow?

AGA. Free, from my soul in prudence have I said it.

CLY. Had Priam's arms prevailed, how had he acted?

AGA. On rich embroidery he had proudly trod.

CLY. Then dread not thou th' invidious tongues of men.

AGA. Yet has the popular voice much potency.

CLY. But the unenvied is not of the happy.

AGA. Ill suits it thy soft sex to love contention.

CLY. To yield sometimes adds honour to the mighty.

AGA. Art thou so earnest to obtain thy wish?

CLY. Let me prevail : indulge me with this conquest.

AGA. If such thy will, haste some one, from my feet—

Unloose these high-bound buskins, lest some god

Look down indignant, if with them I press

These vests sea-tinctured : shame it were to spoil

With unclean tread their rich and costly texture.

Of these enough.—This stranger, let her find

A gentle treatment : from high Heaven the god

Looks with an eye of favour on the victor

That bears his high state meekly ; for none wears

Of his free choice the yoke of slavery.

And she, of many treasures the prime flower

Selected by the troops, has followed me.

Well, since I yield me vanquished by thy voice,

I go, treading on purple, to my house.

CLY. Does not the sea, and who shall drain it, yield

Unfailing stores of these rich tints, that glow

With purple radiance? These this lordly house

Commands, blest with abundance, but to want

A stranger. I had vowed his foot should tread

On many a vestment, when the victims bled,
 The hallowed pledge which this fond breast devised
 For his return. For whilst the vig'rous root
 Maintains its grasp, the stately head shall rise,
 And with its waving foliage screen the house
 From the fierce dog-star's fiery pestilence.
 And on thy presence at thy household hearth,
 Ev'n the cold winter feels a genial warmth.
 But when the hot sun in the unripe grape
 Matures the wine, the husband's perfect virtues
 Spread a refreshing coolness. Thou, O Jove,
 Source of perfection, perfect all my vows,
 And with thy influence favour my intents !

CHORUS.

Strophe I.

What may this mean ? Along the skies
 Why do these dreadful portents roll ?
 Visions of terror, spare my aching eyes,
 Nor shake my sad presaging soul !
 In accents dread, not tuned in vain,
 Why bursts the free, unbidden strain ?
 These are no phantoms of the night,
 That vanish at the faithful light
 Of steadfast confidence. Thou sober power,
 Whither, ah, whither art thou gone ?
 For since the long-passed hour,
 When first for Troy the naval band
 Unmoored their vessels from the strand,
 Thou hast not in my bosom fixed thy throne.

Antistrophe I.

At length they come : these faithful eyes,
 See them returned to Greece again :

Yet, while the sullen lyre in silence lies,
 Erinnys wakes the mournful strain :
 Her dreadful powers possess my soul,
 And bid the untaught measures roll ;
 Swell in rude notes the dismal lay,
 And fright enchanting hope away ;
 Whilst, ominous of ill, grin-visaged care
 Incessant whirls my tortured heart.
 Vain be each anxious fear !
 Return, fair hope, thy seat resume,
 Dispel this melancholy gloom,
 And to my soul thy gladsome light impart !

Strophe 2.

Ah me, what hope ! This mortal state
 Nothing but cruel change can know.
 Should cheerful health our vig'rous steps await,
 Enkindling all her roseate glow ;
 Disease creeps on with silent pace,
 And withers ev'ry blooming grace.
 Proud sails the barque ; the fresh gales breathe,
 And dash her on the rocks beneath.
 In the rich house her treasures plenty pours ;
 Comes sloth, and from her well-poised sling
 Scatters the piled up stores.
 Yet disease makes not all her prey :
 Nor sinks the barque beneath the sea :
 And famine sees the heaven-sent harvest spring.

Antistrophe 2.

But when forth-welling from the wound
 The purple-streaming blood shall fall,
 And the warm tide distain the reeking ground,
 Who shall the vanished life recall ?

Nor verse, nor music's magic power,
Nor the famed leech's boasted lore ;
Not that his art restored the dead,
Jove's thunder burst upon his head.
But that the Fates forbid, and chain my tongue,
My heart, at inspiration's call,
Would the rapt strain prolong :
Now all is dark ; it raves in vain,
And, as it pants with trembling pain,
Desponding feels its fiery transports fall.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CASSANDRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. Thou too, Cassandra, enter ; since high
Jove,
Gracious to thee, hath placed thee in this house,
With many slaves to share the common rites,
And deck the altar of the fav'ring god.
Come from that chariot, and let temperance rule
Thy lofty spirit : ev'n Alcmena's son,
Sold as a slave, submitted to the yoke
Perforce ; and if necessity's hard hand
Hath sunk thee to this fortune, our high rank,
With greatness long acquainted, knows to use
Its power with gentleness : the low-born wretch,
That from his mean degree rises at once
To unexpected riches, treats his slaves
With barbarous and unbounded insolence.
From us thou wilt receive a juster treatment.

CHOR. These are plain truths : since in the toils of fate
Thou art enclosed, submit, if thou canst brook
Submission ; haply I advise in vain.

CLY. If that her language, like the twittering swallow's,
Be not all barbarous and unknown, my words
Within shall with persuasion move her mind.

CHOR. She speaks what best beseems thy present state ;

Follow, submit, and leave that lofty car.

CLY. I have not leisure here before the gates
T' attend on her ; for at the inmost altar,
Blazing with sacred fires, the victims stand
Devoted to the gods for his return
So much beyond our hopes. If to comply
Thou form thy mind, delay not : if thy tongue
Knows not to sound our language, let thy signs
Supply the place of words, speak with thy hand.

CHOR. Of foreign birth she understands us not :
But as new taken struggles in the net.

CLY. 'Tis frenzy this, the impulse of a mind
Disordered ; from a city lately taken
She comes, and knows not how to bear the curb,
Till she has spent her rage in bloody foam.
But I no more waste words to be disdained.

CHOR. My words, for much I pity her, shall bear
No mark of anger. Go, unhappy fair one,
Forsake thy chariot, unreluctant learn
To bear this new yoke of necessity.

CAS. Woe, woe ! O Earth ! Apollo, O Apollo !

CHOR. Why with that voice of woe invoke Apollo ?
Ill do these notes of grief accord with him.

CAS. Woe, woe ! O Earth ! Apollo, O Apollo !

CHOR. Again her inauspicious voice invokes
The god, whose ears are not attuned to woe.

CAS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,
Yet once more, god, thou leadest me to ruin !

CHOR. She seems prophetic of her own misfortunes,
Retaining, though a slave, the divine spirit.

CAS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,
Ah, whither hast thou led me ? to what house ?

CHOR. Is that unknown ? Let me declare it then ;
This is the royal mansion of th' Atridæ.

CAS. It is a mansion hated by the gods,
Conscious to many a foul and horrid deed ;
A slaughter-house, that reeks with human gore.

CHOR. This stranger seems, like the nice-scented hound,
Quick in the trace of blood, which she will find.

CAS. These are convincing proofs. Look there, look
Whilst pity drops a tear, the children butchered, [there,
The father feasting on their roasted flesh !

CHOR. Thy fame, prophetic virgin, we have heard ;
We know thy skill ; but wish no prophets now.

CAS. Ye powers of Heaven, what does she now design ?
What new and dreadful deed of woe is this ?
What dreadful ill designs she in the house,
Intolerable, irreparable mischief,
Whilst far she sends the succouring power away ?

CHOR. These prophecies surpass my apprehension ;
The first I knew, they echo through the city.

CAS. Ah ! daring wretch, dost thou achieve this deed,
Thus in the bath the partner of thy bed .
Refreshing ? How shall I relate th' event ?
Yet speedy shall it be. Ev'n now advanced
Hand above hand extended threatens high.

CHOR. I comprehend her not ; her words are dark,
Perplexing me like abstruse oracles.

CAS. Ah ! What is this, that I see here before me ?
Is it the net of hell ? Or rather hers,
Who shares the bed and plans the murderous deed.
Let discord, whose insatiable rage
Pursues this race, howl through the royal rooms
Against the victim destined to destruction.

CHOR. What fury dost thou call within this house
To hold her orgies ? The dread invocation

Appals me ; to my heart the purple drops
Flow back ; a deathlike mist covers my eyes,
With expectation of some sudden ruin.

CAS. See, see there : from the heifer keep the bull :
O'er his black brows she throws th' entangling vest,
And smites him with her huge two-handed engine.
He falls, amidst the cleansing laver falls :
I tell thee of the bath, the treach'rous bath.

CHOR. T' unfold the obscure oracles of Heaven
Is not my boast ; beneath the shadowing veil
Misfortune lies : when did th' inquirer learn
From the dark sentence an event of joy ?
From time's first records the diviner's voice
Gives the sad heart a sense of misery.

CAS. Ah me, unhappy ! Wretched, wretched fate !
For my own sufferings joined call forth these wailings.
Why hast thou brought me hither ? Wretched me !
Is it for this, that I may die with him ?

CHOR. This is the frenzy of a mind possessed
With wildest ravings. Thy own woes thou wailest
In mournful melody ; like the sweet bird,
That darkling pours her never-ceasing plaint ;
And for her Itys, her lost Itys, wastes
In sweetest woe her melancholy life.

CAS. Ah me ! the fortune of the nightingale
Is to be envied : on her light-poised plumes
She wings at will her easy way, nor knows
The anguish of a tear, whilst o'er my head
Th' impending sword threatens the fatal wound.

CHOR. Whence is this violent, this wild presage
Of ill ? Thy fears are vain ; yet with a voice
That terrifies, though sweet, aloud thou speakest
Thy sorrows. Whence hast thou derived these omens,
Thus deeply marked with characters of death ?

CAS. Alas! the bed, the bridal bed of Paris,
Destructive to his friends! Paternal stream,
Scamander, on thy banks with careless steps
My childhood strayed: but now methinks I go,
Alas, how soon! to prophesy around
Cocytus, and the banks of Acheron!

CHOR. Perspicuous this, and clear! the new-born babe
Might comprehend it; but thy piercing griefs,
Bewailing thus the miseries of thy fate,
Strike deep; they wound me to my very soul.

CAS. Ah, my poor country, my poor bleeding country,
Fall'n, fall'n for ever! And you, sacred altars,
That blazed before my father's towered palace,
Not all your victims could avert your doom!
And on the earth soon shall my warm blood flow.

CHOR. This is consistent with thy former ravings.
Or does some god indeed incumbent press
Thy soul, and modulate thy voice to utter
These lamentable notes of woe and death?
What th' event shall be, exceeds my knowledge.

CAS. The oracle no more shall shroud its visage
Beneath a veil, as a new bride that blushes
To meet the gazing eye; but like the sun,
When with his orient ray he gilds the east,
Shall burst upon you in a flood of light,
Disclosing deeds of deeper dread. Away,
Ye mystic coverings! And you, reverend men,
Bear witness to me, that with steady step
I trace foul deeds that smell above the earth.
For never shall that band, whose yelling notes
In dismal accord pierce th' affrighted ear,
Forsake this house. The genius of the feast,
Drunk with the blood of men, and fired from thence
To bolder daring, ranges through the rooms

Linked with his kindred Furies : these possess
The mansion, and in horrid measures chant
The first base deed ; recording with abhorrence
Th' adulterous lust, that stained a brother's bed.
What, like a skilful archer, have I lodged
My arrow in the mark ? No trifling this,
T' alarm you with false sounds. But swear to me,
In solemn attestation, that I know,
And speak the old offences of this house.

CHOR. In such a rooted ill what healing power
Resides there in an oath ? But much I marvel
That thou, the native of a foreign realm,
Of foreign tongue, canst speak our language freely,
As Greece had been thy constant residence.

CAS. Apollo graced me with this skill. At first
The curb of modesty was on my tongue.

CHOR. Did the god feel the force of young desire ?
In each gay breast ease fans the wanton flame.

CAS. With all the fervour of impatient love
He strove to gratify my utmost wish.

CHOR. And didst thou listen to his tempting lures ?

CAS. First I assented, then deceived the god.

CHOR. Wast thou then fraught with these prophetic arts ?

CAS. Even then I told my country all its woes.

CHOR. The anger of the god fell heavy on thee ?

CAS. My voice, for this offence, lost all persuasion.

CHOR. To us it seems a voice of truth divine.

CAS. Woe, woe is me ! Again the furious power
Swells in my lab'ring breast ; again commands
My bursting voice ; and what I speak is fate.
Look, look, behold those children. There they sit ;
Such are the forms, that in the troubled night
Distract our sleep. By a friend's hands they died :
Are these the ties of blood ? See, in their hands

Their mangled limbs, horrid repast, they bear :
 Th' invited father shares th' accursed feast.
 For this the sluggard savage, that at ease
 Rolls on his bed, nor rouses from his lair,
 'Gainst my returning lord, for I must wear
 The yoke of slavery, plans the dark design
 Of death. Ah me ! the chieftain of the fleet,
 The vanquisher of Troy, but little knows
 What the smooth tongue of mischief, filed to words
 Of glozing courtesy, with fate her friend,
 Like Até ranging in the dark can do
 Calmly : such deeds a woman dares : she dares
 Murder a man. What shall I call this mischief ?
 An Amphisbæna ? or a Scylla rather,
 That in the vexed rocks holds her residence,
 And meditates the mariner's destruction ?
 Mother of Hell, 'midst friends enkindling discord
 And hate implacable ! With dreadful daring
 How did she shout, as if the battle swerved ?
 Yet with feigned joy she welcomes his return.
 These words may want persuasion. What of that ?
 What must come, will come : and ere long with grief
 Thou shalt confess my prophecies are true.

CHOR. Thyestes' bloody feast oft have I heard of,
 Always with horror ; and I tremble now
 Hearing th' unaggravated truth. What else
 She utters, leads my wand'ring thoughts astray
 In wild uncertainty.

CAS. Then mark me well,
 Thou shalt behold the death of Agamemnon.

CHOR. To better omens tune that voice unblessed,
 Or in eternal silence be it sunk.

CAS. This is an ill no medicine can heal.

CHOR. Not if it happens : but avert it, Heaven !

CAS. To pray be thine ; the murd'rous deed is theirs.

CHOR. What man dares perpetrate this dreadful act ?

CAS. How widely dost thou wander from my words ?

CHOR. I heard not whose bold hand should do the deed.

CAS. Yet speak I well the language of your Greece.

CHOR. The gift of Phœbus this ; no trivial grace.

CAS. Ah, what a sudden flame comes rushing on me !

I burn, I burn. Apollo, O Apollo !

This lioness, that in a sensual sty

Rolled with the wolf, the generous lion absent,

Will kill me. And the sorc'ress, as she brews

Her philtred cup, will drug it with my blood.

She glories, as against her husband's life

She whets the axe, her vengeance falls on him

For that he came accompanied by me.

Why do I longer wear these useless honours,

This laurel wand, and these prophetic wreaths ?

Away ; before I die I cast you from me ;

Lie there, and perish ; I am rid of you ;

Or deck the splendid ruin of some other.

Apollo rends from me these sacred vestments,

Who saw me in his rich habiliments

Mocked 'midst my friends, doubtless without a cause.

When in opprobrious terms they jeered my skill,

And treated me as a poor vagrant wretch,

That told events from door to door for bread,

I bore it all : but now the prophet god,

That with his own arts graced me, sinks me down

To this low ruin. As my father fell

Butchered ev'n at the altar, like the victim's

My warm blood at the altar shall be shed :

Nor shall we die unhonoured by the gods.

He comes, dreadful in punishment, the son

Of this bad mother, by her death t' avenge

His murdered father : distant though he roams.
 An outcast and an exile, by his friends
 Fenced from these deeds of violence, he comes
 In solemn vengeance for his father laid
 Thus low. But why for foreign miseries
 Does the tear darken in my eye, that saw
 The fall of Ilium, and its haughty conquerors
 In righteous judgment thus receive their meed ?
 But forward now ; I go to close the scene,
 Nor shrink from death. I have a vow in heaven :
 And further, I adjure these gates of hell,
 Well may the blow be aimed, that whilst my blood
 Flows in a copious stream, I may not feel
 The fierce, convulsive agonies of death ;
 But gently sink, and close my eyes in peace.

CHOR. Unhappy, in thy knowledge most unhappy,
 Long have thy sorrows flowed. But if indeed
 Thou dost foresee thy death, why, like the heifer
 Led by a heavenly impulse, do thy steps
 Advance thus boldly to the cruel altar ?

CAS. I could not by delay escape my fate.

CHOR. Yet is there some advantage in delay.

CAS. The day is come : by flight I should gain little.

CHOR. Thy boldness adds to thy unhappiness.

CAS. None of the happy shuns his destined end.

CHOR. True ; but to die with glory crowns our praise.

CAS. So died my father, so his noble sons.

CHOR. What may this mean ? Why backward dost thou
 start ?

Do thy own thoughts with horror strike thy soul ?

CAS. The scent of blood and death breathèd from this
 house.

CHOR. The victims now are bleeding at the altar.

CAS. 'Tis such a smell as issues from the tomb.

CHOR. This is no Syrian odour in the house.

CAS. Such though it be, I enter to bewail
My fate, and Agamemnon's. To have lived,
Let it suffice. And think not, gen'rous strangers,
Like the poor bird that flutters o'er the bough,
Through fear I linger. But my dying words
You will remember, when her blood shall flow
For mine, woman's for woman's: and the man's,
For his that falls by his accursed wife.

CHOR. Thy fate, poor sufferer, fills my eyes with tears.

CAS. Yet once more let me raise my mournful voice.
Thou sun, whose rising beams shall bless no more
These closing eyes! You, whose vindictive rage
Hangs o'er my hated murderers, oh avenge me,
Though, a poor slave, I fall an easy prey!
This is the state of man: in prosperous fortune
A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground
Joy's baseless fabric: in adversity
Comes malice with a sponge moistened in gall,
And wipes each beauteous character away:
More than the first this melts my soul to pity.

CHOR. By nature man is formed with boundless wishes
For prosperous fortune; and the great man's door
Stands ever open to that envied person,
On whom she smiles; but enter not with words,
Like this poor sufferer, of such dreadful import.
His arms the powers of Heaven have graced with conquest;
Troy's proud walls lie in dust; and he returns
Crowned by the gods with glory: but if now
His blood must for the blood there shed atone,
If he must die for those that died, too dearly
He buys his triumph. Who of mortal men
Hears this, and dares to think his state secure?

AGA. [*within*] Oh! I am wounded with a deadly blow.

SEMICHOR. List, list. What cry is this of wounds and death?

AGA. Wounded again, oh, basely, basely murdered!

SEMICHORUS.

'Tis the king's cry ; the dreadful deed is doing.

What shall we do? What measures shall we form?

What if we spread th' alarm, and with our outcries

Call at the palace gates the citizens?

Nay rather rush we in, and prove the deed,

Whilst the fresh blood is reeking on the sword.

I readily concur ; determine then ;

For something must be done, and instantly.

That's evident. This bloody prelude threatens

More deeds of violence and tyranny.

We linger : those that tread the paths of honour,

Late though she meets them, sleep not in their task.

Perplexity and doubt distract my thoughts :

Deeds of high import ask maturest counsel.

Such are my thoughts, since fruitless were th' attempt

By all our pleas to raise the dead to life.

To save our wretched lives then shall we bow

To these imperious lords, these stains of honour?

That were a shame indeed ! No ; let us die :

Death is more welcome than such tyranny.

Shall we then take these outcries, which we heard,

For proofs, and thence conclude the king is slain?

We should be well assured ere we pronounce :

To know, and to conjecture, differ widely.

There's reason in thy words. Best enter then,

And see what fate attends the son of Atreus.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. To many a fair speech suited to the
If my words now be found at variance, [times,
I shall not blush. For when the heart conceives
Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what means
T' achieve the deed more certain, than to wear
The form of friendship, and with circling wiles
Enclose him in th' insuperable net?
This was no hasty, rash-conceived design ;
But formed with deep, premeditated thought,
Incensed with wrongs ; and often have I stood,
T' assay the execution, where he fell ;
And planned it so, for I with pride avow it,
He had no power t' escape, or to resist,
Entangled in the gorgeous robe, that shone
Fatally rich. I struck him twice, and twice
He groaned, then died. A third time as he lay
I gored him with a wound, a grateful present
To the stern god, that in the realms below
Reigns o'er the dead : there let him take his seat.
He lay ; and spouting from his wounds a stream
Of blood, bedewed me with these crimson drops.
I glory in them, like the genial earth,
When the warm showers of heaven descend, and wake
The flow'rets to unfold their vermeil leaves.
Come then, ye reverend senators of Argos,
Joy with me, if your hearts be tuned to joy ;
And such I wish them. Were it decent now
To pour libations o'er the dead, with justice
It might be done ; for his injurious pride
Filled for this house the cup of desolation,
Fated himself to drain it to the dregs.

CHOR. We are astonished at thy daring words,
Thus vaunting o'er the ruins of thy husband.

CLY. Me, like a witless woman, wouldst thou fright?
I tell thee, my firm soul disdains to fear.
Be thou disposed t' applaud, or censure me,
I reckon it not: there Agamemnon lies,
My husband, slaughtered by this hand: I dare
Avow his death, and justify the deed.

CHOR. What poison hath the baleful-teeming earth,
Or the chafed billows of the foamy sea,
Given thee for food, or mingled in thy cup,
To work thee to this frenzy? Thy cursed hand
Hath struck, hath slain. For this thy country's wrath
Shall in just vengeance burst upon thy head,
And with abhorrence drive thee from the city.

CLY. And dost thou now denounce upon my head
Vengeance, and hate, and exile? 'Gainst this man
Urging no charge? Yet he without remorse,
As if a lamb that wantoned in his pastures
Were doomed to bleed, could sacrifice his daughter,
For whose dear sake I felt a mother's pains,
T' appease the winds of Thrace. Should not thy voice
Adjudge this man to exile, in just vengeance
For such unholy deeds? Scarce hast thou heard
What I have done, but sentence is pronounced,
And that with rigour too. But mark me well,
I boldly tell thee that I bear a soul
Prepared for either fortune; if thy hand
Be stronger, use thy power: but if the gods
Prosper my cause, be thou assured, old man,
Thou shalt be taught a lesson of discretion.

CHOR. Aspiring are thy thoughts, and thy proud vaunts
Swell with disdain; ev'n yet thy madding mind
Is drunk with slaughter; with a savage grace
The thick blood stains thine eye. But soon thy friends
Faithless shall shrink from thy unsheltered side,
And leave thee to just vengeance, blow for blow.

CLY. Hear then this solemn oath : By that revenge,
Which for my daughter I have greatly taken ;
By the dread powers of Até and Erinnys,
To whom my hand devoted him a victim,
Without a thought of fear I range these rooms,
Whilst present to my aid Ægisthus stands,
As he hath stood, guarding my social hearth :
He is my shield, my strength, my confidence.
Here lies my base betrayer, who at Troy
Could revel in the arms of each Chryseis ;
He, and his captive minion ; she that marked
Portents and prodigies, and with ominous tongue
Presaged the Fates ; a wanton harlotry,
True to the rower's benches : their just meed
Have they received. See where he lies ; and she,
That like the swan warbled her dying notes,
His paranymp lies with him, to my bed
Leaving the darling object of my wishes.

CHOR. No slow-consuming pains, to torture us
Fixed to the groaning couch, await us now ;
But fate comes rushing on, and brings the sleep
That wakes no more. There lies the king, whose virtues
Were truly royal. In a woman's cause
He suffered much ; and by a woman perished.
Ah fatal Helen ! in the fields of Troy
How many has thy guilt, thy guilt alone,
Stretched in the dust ? But now by murd'rous hands
Hast thou sluiced out this rich and noble blood,
Whose foul stains never can be purged. This ruin
Hath discord, raging in the house, effected.

CLY. Wish not for death ; nor bow beneath thy griefs ;
Nor turn thy rage on Helen, as if she
Had drenched the fields with blood, as she alone
Fatal to Greece had caused these dreadful ills.

CHOR. Tremendous fiend, that breathest through this house
Thy baleful spirit, and with equal daring
Hast steeled these royal sisters to fierce deeds
That rend my soul, now, like the baleful raven,
Incumbent o'er the body dost thou joy
T' affright us with thy harsh and dissonant notes!

CLY. There's sense in this: now hast thou touched the key,
Rousing the fury that from sire to son
Hath bade the stream of blood, first poured by her,
Descend: one sanguine tide scarce rolled away,
Another flows in terrible succession.

CHOR. And dost thou glory in these deeds of death,
This vengeance of the fury? Thus to pride thee
In ruin, and the havoc of thy house,
Becomes thee ill. Ah! 'tis a higher power,
That thus ordains: we see the hand of Jove,
Whose will directs the fate of mortal man.
My king, my royal lord, what words can show
My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues!
Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,
By impious murder breathing out thy life?
Art thou thus fall'n, ah the disloyal bed!
Secretly slaughtered by a treach'rous hand?

CLY. Thou say'st, and say'st aloud, I did this deed:
Say not that I, that Agamemnon's wife,
Did it: the fury, fatal to this house,
In vengeance for Thyestes' horrid feast,
Assumed this form, and with her ancient rage
Hath for the children sacrificed the man.

CHOR. That thou art guiltless of this blood, what proof,
What witness? From the father, in his cause,
Rise an avenger! Stained with the dark streams
Of kindred blood fierce waves the bick'ring sword,
And points the ruthless boy to deeds of horror.

My king, my royal lord, what words can show
 My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues !
 Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,
 By impious murder breathing out thy life ?
 Art thou thus fall'n, ah the disloyal bed !
 Secretly slaughtered by a treach'rous hand ?

CLY. No : of his death far otherwise I deem,
 Nothing disloyal. Nor with secret guile
 Wrought he his murd'rous mischiefs on this house.
 For my sweet flow'ret, opening from his stem,
 My Iphigenia, my lamented child,
 Whom he unjustly slew, he justly died.
 Nor let him glory in the shades below ;
 For as he taught his sword to thirst for blood,
 So by the thirsty sword his blood was shed.

CHOR. Perplexed and troubled in my anxious thought,
 Amidst the ruins of this house, despair
 Hangs heavy on me. Drop by drop no more
 Descends the shower of blood ; but the wild storm
 In one red torrent shakes the solid walls ;
 Whilst vengeance, ranging through the deathful scene,
 For further mischief whets her fatal sword.

SEMICHOR. O Earth, that I had rested in thy bosom,
 Ere I had seen him lodged with thee, and shrunk
 To the brief compass of a silver urn !
 Who shall attend the rites of sepulture ?
 Who sha'l lament him ? Thou, whose hand has shed
 Thy husband's blood, wilt thou dare raise the voice
 Of mourning o'er him ? Thy unhallowed hand
 Renders these honours, should they come from thee,
 Unwelcome to his shade. What faithful tongue,
 Fond to recount his great and godlike acts,
 Shall steep in tears his funeral eulogy ?

CLY. This care concerns not thee : by us he fell,

By us he died ; and we will bury him
With no domestic grief. But Iphigenia,
His daughter, as is meet, jocund and blithe
Shall meet him on the banks of that sad stream,
The flood of sorrow, and with filial duty
Hang fondling on her father's neck, and kiss him.

CHOR. Thus insult treads on insult. Of these things
Hard is it to decide. Th' infected stain
Communicates th' infection ; murder calls
For blood ; and outrage on th' injurious head,
At Jove's appointed time, draws outrage down.
Thus, by the laws of nature, son succeeds
To sire ; and who shall drive him from the house ?

CLY. These are the oracles of truth. But hear me ;
It likes me to the genius of the race
Of Plisthenes to swear that what is past,
Though poor the satisfaction, bounds my wishes.
Hither he comes no more : no, let him stain
Some other house with gore. For me, some poor,
Some scanty pittance of the goods contents me,
Well satisfied that from this house I've driven
These frantic Furies red with kindred blood.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS. Hail to this joyful day, whose welcome light
Brings vengeance ! Now I know that the just gods
Look from their skies, and punish impious mortals,
Seeing this man rolled in the blood-wove woof,
The tissue of the Furies, grateful sight,
And suffering for his father's fraudulent crimes.
Atreus, his father, sovereign of this land,
Brooking no rival in his power, drove out
My father and his brother, poor Thyestes,
A wretched exile ; from his country far

He wandered ; but at length returned, and stood
A suppliant before the household gods,
Secure in their protection that his blood
Should not distain the pavement. This man's father,
The sacrilegious Atreus, with more show
Of courtesy than friendship, spread the feast ;
Devoting, such the fair pretence, the day
To hospitality and genial mirth :
Then to my father in that feast served up
The flesh of his own sons : their hands and feet
Hacked off before, their undistinguished parts
He eat, without suspicion eat, a food
Destructive to the race. But when he knew
Th' unhallowed deed, he raised a mournful cry,
And starting up with horror spurned to the ground
The barb'rous banquet, utt'ring many a curse
Of deepest vengeance on the house of Pelops.
Thus perish all the race of Plisthenes !
And for this cause thou seest him fall'n ! His death
With justice I devised ; for me he chased,
The thirteenth son, an infant in my cradle,
With my unhappy father. Nursed abroad,
Vengeance led back my steps, and taught my hand
From far to reach him. All this plan of ruin
Was mine, reckless of what ensues ; ev'n death
Were glorious, now he lies caught in my vengeance.

CHOR. T' embitter ills with insult, this, Ægisthus,
I praise not. Thou, of thine own free accord,
Hast slain this man ; such is thy boast ; this plan
Of ruin, which we mourn, is thine alone.
But be thou well assured thou shalt not 'scape,
When, roused to justice, the avenging people
Shall hurl their stones with curses on thy head.

ÆGIS. From thee, who labourest at the lowest oar,

This language, and to him that holds the helm !
Thou shalt be taught, old man, what at thy age
Is a hard lesson, prudence. Chains and hunger,
Besides the load of age, have sovereign virtue
To physic the proud heart. Behold this sight ;
Does it not ope thine eyes ? Rest quiet then ;
Contend not with the strong ; there's danger in it.

CHOR. And could thy softer sex, whilst the rough war
Demands its chieftain, violate his bed,
And on his first return contrive his death ?

ÆGIS. No more : this sounds th' alarm to rude complaints.

The voice of Orpheus with its soothing notes
Attracted ev'n the savage ; whilst thy yells
To rage inflame the gentle : but take heed ;
Dungeons and chains may teach thee moderation.

CHOR. Shalt thou reign king in Argos ? Thou, whose
soul

Plotted this murder ; whilst thy coward hand
Shrunk back, nor dared to execute the deed ?

ÆGIS. Wiles and deceit are female qualities :
The memory of my ancient enmity
Had waked suspicion. Master of his treasures,
Be it my next attempt to gain the people :
Whome'er I find unwilling to submit,
Him, like a high-fed and unruly horse
Reluctant to the harness, rigour soon
Shall tame : confinement, and her meagre comrade,
Keen hunger, will abate his fiery mettle.

CHOR. Did not the baseness of thy coward soul
Unman thee to this murder, that a woman,
Shame to her country and her country's gods,
Must dare the horrid deed ? But when Orestes,
Where'er he breathes the vital air, returns,

Good fortune be his guide, shall not his hand
Take a bold vengeance in the death of both?

ÆGIS. Such since thy thoughts and words, soon shalt
thou feel——

CHOR. Help, ho! soldiers and friends; the danger's
near;

Help, ho! advance in haste with your drawn swords!

ÆGIS. My sword is drawn: Ægisthus dares to die.

CHOR. Prophetic be thy words! We hail the omen.

CLY. Dearest of men, do not heap ills on ills:

I wish not to exasperate, but to heal,

Misfortune's past: enough is given to vengeance;

Let no more blood be spilt. Go then, old men,

Each to your homes; go, whilst ye may, in peace.

What hath been done the rigour of the times

Compelled, and hard necessity; the weight

Of these afflictions, grievous as they are,

By too severe a doom falls on our heads.

Disdain not to be taught, though by a woman.

ÆGIS. Ay; but to hear this vain, tongue-doughty babbler,
Lavish of speech that tempts to desperate deeds,

It moves me from the firmness of my temper.

CHOR. An Argive scorns to fawn on guilty greatness.

ÆGIS. My vengeance shall o'ertake thee at the last.

CHOR. Not if just Heaven shall guide Orestes hither.

ÆGIS. An exile, I well know, feeds on vain hopes.

CHOR. Go on then, gorge with blood; thou hast the
means.

ÆGIS. This folly, be assured, shall cost thee dear.

CHOR. The craven, in her presence, rears his crest.

CLY. Slight men, regard them not; but let us enter,
Assume our state, and order all things well.

THE CHOEPHORÆ.

THE Chorus in the former play, with a dignity and firmness becoming senators of Argos, had expressed their abhorrence of the murder of Agamemnon even to the face of Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, and threatened them with the anger of the gods and the vengeance of Orestes : this is here executed.

The characters of Orestes and Electra are finely supported. A pious resentment of the murder of his father, a consciousness of his own high rank, and a just indignation at the injuries he had received from the murderers, a generous desire to deliver his country from the tyranny of these usurpers, and above all the express command of Apollo, with a promise of his protection if he obeyed, and a denunciation of the severest punishments should he dare to disobey, incited Orestes to this deed : he is accordingly drawn as a man of a brave and daring spirit, touched with the highest sense of honour, and the most religious reverence of the gods : in such a character there could be nothing savage and ferocious ; and we are pleased to find him deeply sensible of the horror of the deed which he was obliged to perpetrate, and averse to plunge his sword into the breast of his mother. “ Electra’s character (in the words of the critic) is that of a fierce and determined, but withal of a

generous and virtuous woman. Her motives to revenge were, principally, a strong sense of justice, and superior affection for a father; not a rooted, unnatural aversion to a mother. She acted, as appears, not from the perturbation of a tumultuous revenge, but from a fixed abhorrence of wrong, and a virtuous sense of duty." Consistently with this character, when she had given Orestes a spirited account of their father's murder, which drew him to declare his resolution to revenge it, showing at the same time some sign of remorse, she adds a short relation of the barbarous indignities offered to the dead body; a deed of horror which she knew would shock his soul. She had seen her father murdered, his body mangled and buried without its honours; her brother, whom she loved with the tenderest affection, deprived of his throne, and exiled from his country; her mother in the arms of Ægisthus abandoning herself to her loose and infamous pleasures; she was herself continually exposed to the insults and barbarous treatment of this ungentle mother; what wonder then, that a spirit naturally lofty and sensible, should catch fire at these injuries, contract a wolfish fierceness, as she expresses it, and urge her brother to sacrifice these proud oppressors to justice and revenge? But the poet, with great regard to decorum, removes her from the scene before the dreadful deed is to be committed: with regard to his management of the catastrophe, nothing could be more judicious. Orestes, who had rushed on Ægisthus with the fury of a tiger, in the presence of his mother feels himself under the restraint of filial reverence, and confesses his reluctance to shed her blood; till Pylades animates him with a sentence as solemn as the Delphic Oracle; which finely marks the fatal blow as an act of necessary justice, not of ruffian violence. Even the Chorus, who enter warmly into the interests of Electra and Orestes, and had

fired him to revenge by every argument of duty, justice, law, and honour; who had wished to hear the dying groans of the guilty tyrants, and to echo them back in notes as dismal, after the deed is done, reassume the softer sentiments of humanity, and lament their fate. The remorse and madness of Orestes is touched in the finest manner. These indeed are but sketches, but they are the sketches of a great master: a succeeding poet had the skill to give them their finishing, and heightened them with the warmest glow of colouring. The spirit of Æschylus shines through this tragedy; but a certain softening of grief hangs over it, and gives it an air of solemn magnificence.

The scene of this tragedy, as of the former, is at Argos before the royal palace. Orestes, according to the custom of ancient times, offering his hair on the tomb of his father, sees a train of females advancing from the house, and *bringing libations to the tomb*; from whence the play receives its name. The action is afterwards removed to the area before the palace. This requires no change of scene.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

SERVANTS.

CHORUS OF TROJAN DAMES

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES. O thou, that to the regions of the dead
Bearest thy father's high behests, O hear,
Hear, Mercury, thy supplicant, protect,
And save me; for I come, from exile come,

Revisiting my country!—Thou, dread shade,
 At whose high tomb I bow, shade of my father,
 Hear me, O hear! To thee these crisped locks,
 Once sacred to the nurture-giving stream
 Of Inachus, in th' anguish of my soul
 I now devote.—But what are these, this train
 Of females in the sable garb of woe
 Decently habited? Whence spring their sorrows?
 Does some new ruin lord it in the house?
 Or haply, if I deem aright, they bring
 Oblations to my father's shade, to soothe
 The mighty dead. It must be so; for, see,
 Electra is among them, my poor sister,
 Pre-eminent in grief. Almighty Jove,
 O give me to revenge my father's death,
 And shield me with thy favour! Pylades,
 Stand we apart concealed, that I may learn
 What leads this train of suppliant females hither.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

This sadly-pensive train to lead,
 With hallowed rites to soothe the dead,
 To bear these off'rings to his shrine,
 The melancholy task is mine.
 And, as from yon proud walls I take my way,
 My cheeks, with many a sounding blow
 Beat by these hands, in crimson glow,
 Whilst my poor heart to anguish sinks a prey:
 And the fair texture of this vest,
 That decent o'er my swelling bosom rolled,
 My griefs through ev'ry waving fold
 Have rent, and bared my bleeding breast,

Antistrophe 1.

For in the still and midnight hour,
When darkness aids his hideous power,
Affright, that breathes his vengeance deep,
Haunts with wild dreams the troubled sleep,
That freeze the blood, and raise the bristling hair :
Grim spectre ! he with horrid tread
Stalked around the curtained bed,
And raised a yell that pierced the tortured ear.
Aghast the heaven-taught prophet stood ;
The dead, he cries, the angry dead around,
'These dreadful notes of vengeance sound,
Dreadful to those that shed their blood.

Strophe 2.

With soul-subduing fear appalled
Me this unholy woman called,
To bear these gifts, this train to lead,
And soothe to peace the mighty dead.
But will these gifts be grateful to his shade ?
O Earth, when once the gushing blood
Hath on thy purple bosom flowed,
What grateful expiation shall be made ?
Ill-fated house, thy master slain,
How are thy glories vanished ! O'er thy walls
A joyless, sunless darkness falls,
And horror holds his hateful reign.

Antistrophe 2.

Round him the blaze of greatness shone,
And dignity adorned his throne :
The people bowed before their lord,
Awe-struck, and his high state adored.

Where now that reverend awe, that sacred dread
Of majesty? Success, to thee,
As to a god, men bend the knee.
But justice hastes t' avenge each impious deed;
Some in day's clear and open light,
Some in the dusky evening's twilight shade,
Or by delay more furious made,
Some in the dreary gloom of night.

Epode.

His blood, that sunk upon the ground
A stiffened mass of carnage lies,
Aloud for vengeance on his murderers cries:
Até obeys thy call; but slow
Delays, till dreary night enclose them round,
Prepared to strike a deeper blow.
Shall he, that foul with midnight rape
Pollutes the nuptial bed, escape?
Murder and lust! Were all the streams, that wind
Their mazy progress to the main,
To cleanse this odious stain in one combined,
The streams combined would flow in vain.
Me, from my bleeding country torn,
Condemned the servile yoke to bear,
Bitter constraint and spirit-sinking fear
Compel t' obey their proud commands;
Just, or unjust, perforce they must be borne;
Captive, my life is in their hands:
Perforce my struggling soul conceals its hate;
My vest forbids the starting tear to flow;
Mourning the mighty chief's unhappy fate
Silent I stand, and stiffen with my woe.
ELEC. Ye captive females, to whose care this house
Owes what it has of order, since with me

You here are present on these suppliant rites
Attendant, show, instruct me, as I pour
These solemn offerings on the tomb, what words
Of gracious potency shall I pronounce?
Or how invoke my father? Shall I say
"To her loved lord the loving wife hath sent
These presents?" Shame forbids: nor hath my tongue
Aught of address, whilst on my father's tomb
I offer these atonements. Should I rather,
As nature prompts, entreat him to return
Like garlands to the senders, meet reward
For their ill deeds? Or with inglorious silence,
For so he perished, on the thirsty earth
Pour these libations, then retire, like one
That in some worthless vessel throws away
Something unclean, and casts the vessel with it,
Nor backwards turns her eyes? Instruct me, friends,
Advise me, for alike we hate this house;
Be open then; here you have none to fear.
The free escapes not fate, more than the wretch
That trembles at his proud lord's tyrannous hand.
If thou hast aught of counsel, give it me.

CHOR. Since, as some hallowed shrine, thy father's tomb
I reverence, at thy bidding I will speak.

ELEC. I charge thee, by that reverence, freely speak.

CHOR. With these libations pour thy ardent vows
For blessings on the head of all his friends.

ELEC. Whom by that honoured title shall I name?

CHOR. Thyself the first, and all that hate Ægisthus.

ELEC. For thee and me then shall I pour these vows?

CHOR. To learn and weigh this well, be thy concern.

ELEC. Whom to this friendly number shall I add?

CHOR. Though distant far, remember poor Orestes.

ELEC. That's ill: I learn no little wisdom from thee.

CHOR. Remember next the authors of his death.

ELEC. What should I say? Instruct my lack of knowledge.

CHOR. Pray that some god, or man, may come to them.

ELEC. With what intent? To judge, or to avenge?

CHOR. Speak plainly, to repay them death for death.

ELEC. And may this be with reverence to the gods?

CHOR. What hinders to requite a foe with ill?

ELEC. [*at the tomb*] O thou, that to the realms beneath the earth

Guidest the dead, be present, Mercury,
And tell me that the powers, whose solemn sway
Extends o'er those dark regions, hear my vows;
Tell me that o'er my father's house they roll
Their awful eyes, and o'er this earth, that bears
And fosters all, rich in their various fruits.
And thee, my father, pouring from this vase
Libations to thy shade, on thee I call,
O pity me, pity my dear Orestes,
That in this seat of kings our hands may hold
The golden reins of power: for now oppressed,
And harassed by a mother's cruel hand,
Who for Ægisthus, that contrived thy death,
Exchanged her royal lord, he wanders far,
And I am treated as a slave: Orestes
From his possessions exiled, they with pride
Wantonly revel in the wealth thy toils
Procured: O grant Orestes may return,
And fortune be his guide. Hear me, my father,
And grant me, more than e'er my mother knew,
The grace and blush of unstained modesty,
And a more holy hand! For us these vows;
But on our foes may thy avenger rise
Demanding blood for blood. These vows I breathe
In dreadful imprecations on their heads.

Be thou to us, my father, with the gods,
This earth, and pow'rful justice, be to us,
That breathe this vital air, a guide to good.
With these libations such the vows I offer.
Now let your sorrows flow : attune the pæan,
And soothe his shade with solemn harmony.

CHOR. Swell the warbling voice of woe,
Loudly let the measures flow ;
And ever and anon the sorrowing tear
Trickling dew the hallowed ground,
T' avert the ills we fear ;
Whilst on this sepulchral mound
Her pious hands the pure libation shed,
T' atone the mighty dead.
Hear me, O hear me, awful lord,
Through the dreary gloom adored !
Ha ! Who is this ? See, sisters, see,
Mark with what force he shakes his angry lance :
Comes he this ruined house to free ?
So does some Thracian chief advance ;
So Mars, when roused with war's alarms,
Radiant all his clashing arms,
Rears high his flaming falchion to the blow,
And thunders on the foe.

ELEC. 'Tis finished ; these libations to my father
The earth has drunk.—Thou awful power, that holdest
'Twixt this ethereal sky and the dark realms
Beneath dread intercourse : what may this mean ?
'Tis all amazement. Share this wonder with me.

CHOR. Say what : my throbbing heart has caught th'
alarm.

ELEC. Placed on the tomb behold these crisped locks.

CHOR. Shorn from a man, or some high-bosomed dame ?

ELEC. 'Tis no hard task to form a strong conjecture.

CHOR. Young though thou art, inform my riper age.

ELEC. None here, myself excepted, could devote
His locks, the mournful off'ring ill becomes
Our enemies. Then the colour; mark it well;
'Tis the same shade.

CHOR. With whose? I burn to know.

ELEC. With mine: compare them: are they not much
like?

CHOR. Are they a secret off'ring from Orestes?

ELEC. Mark: they are very like his clust'ring locks.

CHOR. I marvel how he dared to venture hither.

ELEC. Perchance he sent this honour to his father.

CHOR. Nor that less cause of sorrow, if his foot
Must never press his native soil again.

ELEC. A flood of grief o'erwhelms me, and my heart
Is pierced with anguish; from my eyes that view
These locks, fast fall the ceaseless-streaming tears,
Like wintry showers. To whom besides, that here
Inhabits, could I think these locks belong?
Could she, who slew him, offer on his tomb
Her hair? Alas! her thoughts are impious all,
Such as a daughter dares not name. I deem,
With reason then I deem they graced the head
Of my Orestes, dearest of mankind:
Why should not I indulge the flatt'ring hope?
Ah! had they but a voice, could they but speak,
That I no more might fluctuate with these doubts
Perplexed and troubled; could they plainly tell me
If they were shorn from a foe's hated head,
Or fondly mix their kindred griefs with mine,
A grace and honour to my father's tomb!
But to the gods, that know what furious storms
Burst o'er me, like a shipwrecked mariner,
I make appeal: if haply aught of safety

Remains, from this small root the vig'rous trunk
 May spread its shelt'ring branches.—Further mark
 Th' impression of these feet ; they show that two
 Trod here ; himself perchance and his attendant ;
 One of th' exact dimensions with my own.
 But all is anguish and perplexity.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES. In other pressures beg the fav'ring gods
 To hear thy vows, and shower their blessings on thee.

ELEC. What blessing from them have I now obtained ?

ORES. Thou seest before thee whom but late thine eyes
 Most wished to see.

ELEC. And dost thou know the name,
 Which with fond joy my tongue delights to utter ?

ORES. Thy fervent vows, I know, are for Orestes.

ELEC. And of those vows what have I yet obtained ?

ORES. I am Orestes : seek no firmer friend.

ELEC. With wily trains thou wouldst ensnare me, stranger.

ORES. Then should I spread these trains against myself.

ELEC. But thou wouldst mock me in my miseries.

ORES. To mock thy miseries were t' insult my own.

ELEC. Am I indeed conversing with Orestes ?

ORES. Thou seest me present, yet art slow to know me,
 When offered on the tomb thou saw'st these locks,
 When with thy own th' impressions of my feet
 Were measured, joy gave wings to expectation,
 And imaged me before thee. Mark these locks,
 Shorn from thy brother's head ; observe them well,
 Compare them with thy own. * This tissue, view it,
 The texture is thy own, the rich embroidery,
 Thine are these figures, by thy curious hand
 Imaged in gold.—Let not thy joy transport thee :
 Our nearest friends are now our deadliest foes.

ELEC. Thou dearest pledge of this imperial house,
From thee my hopes, watered with tears, arose :
Thy valour shall support our righteous cause,
And vindicate the glories of thy father.
Pride of my soul, for my fond tongue must speak,
The love my father shared, my mother shared,
Once shared, but justly now my soul abhors her,
And that poor victim, my unhappy sister,
Is centred all in thee : thou art my father,
My mother, sister, my support, my glory,
My only aid : and Heaven's great King shall prosper
Thy courage, and the justice of thy cause.

ORES. Look down, great King of Heaven, look down,
These deeds of baseness ; see an orphan race, [behold
Reft of the parent eagle, that, inwreathed
In the dire serpent's spiry volumes, perished.
They, unprotected, feel th' oppressive pangs
Of famine, yet too weak to wing their flight,
And, like their parent, fill their nest with prey.
We are the eagle's offspring, of our father
Deprived, and driven in exile from his house.
Before thy altars, loaded by his hand,
He bowed with pious reverence. Should thy will
Permit his young to perish, who shall pay thee
Like costly honours ? Should the eagle's offspring
Be doomed to perish, who shall bear thy thunders,
Dread sign of wrath awaked on mortal man ?
Nor will this empire, withered from its roots,
Adorn thy altars on the solemn day.
With hallowed victims. Save us then, protect us,
To all its former glories raise this house,
Whose ruined towers seem bending to their fall.

CHOR. Ye generous offspring of this royal house,
And guardians of its honour, check your transports ;

Lest they are heard, and some incontinent tongue
Bear them to our bad rulers : may these eyes
First see the dark wreaths of their funeral piles.

ORES. The voice of Phœbus never shall deceive :
In dreadful accents uttered from his shrine
Aloud he charged me to defy the danger,
Threatening to rack my soul with keenest tortures,
Should I forbear t' avenge my father's death
With equal retribution on his murderer,
That proudly riots in my wasted wealth.
This honoured shade he charged me to avenge,
Though round enclosed with evils ; to the dead
This triumph o'er their foes the voice declared
A lenient joy ; to us denouncing ills,
Corrosive leprosy with rankling tooth
To gnaw our flesh, and taint our healthful bodies
With ulcerous foulness, changing these fresh locks
T' untimely white ; with trains of heavier woes
Raised by the Furies from my father's blood,
Who in the realms of night sees this, and bends
His gloomy brows. For the dark shafts, that fly
From those beneath slain by the kindred hand
Of villain baseness, frenzy, and vain fear
That trembles at the shadows of the night,
Rouse, sting, and drive the vice-polluted wretch
With brazen scourges tortured through the city.
He from the friendly bowl, the hallowed goblet,
The social intercourse, the incensed altar
Is chased, condemned to bear the secret pangs
Of inly-gnawing guilt : meanwhile the fiends,
Hatred and infamy, pursue his steps,
And drag him to an execrable death.
Such was the voice of Phœbus, and demands
My prompt obedience. Could my soul refuse

T' obey the awful mandate, yet the deed
Must be accomplished ; many urgencies
Conspire ; the charges of the gods, the grief
That wounds me for my father, the fierce pangs
Of penury compel me ; and the shame,
That burns the generous soul, to leave my country,
And all those heroes glorious through the world,
Whose conquering arms laid Troy's proud towers in dust,
Slaves to two women ; for his soul is woman :
If not, th' occasion soon will prove his spirit.

CHOR. And you, tremendous destinies, whose power
Is ratified by Jove, mark the firm course
Of justice, and by that direct th' event.
Be th' insults of the hostile tongue repaid
With hostile insults : justice calls aloud,
Demanding vengeance : let the murd'rous blow,
Requite the murd'rous blow. The solemn voice,
Requiring that oppressive force should feel
Oppressive force, is sanctified by age.

ORES. O thou much injured shade, my suffering father,
In thy dear cause what shall I say, what do,
Guided by fortune hither ? Where, O where
Is thy couch spread ? Our light is shaded o'er
With darkness deep as thine ; our youthful graces,
That in this royal house once bloomed with hope
Fair opening, shrink at the rough blast of sorrow.

CHOR. No : the devouring flames, my son, that waste
The body of the dead, touch not the soul ;
That lives, and knows its destined hour to show
Its wrath : yet for the dead our sorrows rise.
Meanwhile th' oppressor stands a signal mark ;
And the just griefs of fathers and of sons
With restless search trace all around for vengeance.

ELEC. Hear me too, O my father ; in those griefs

Which at thy sepulchre thy children pour,
I have a mournful part. Thy tomb receives
Alike the suppliant and the exile. Which,
Ah, which of these is well? Which without evils?
No lenient hand can ease our miseries.

CHOR. Yet may the god, that uttered from the shrine
His awful voice, from these raise other sounds
More pleasing; and for these sepulchral notes,
Notes steeped in tears, through all these royal rooms
The voice of joy may ring, and hail their lord
Returned to bless them with his kind protection.

ELEC. Yet, O my father, hadst thou greatly fallen
Beneath the walls of Troy, pierced by the spear
Of some bold Lycian, leaving to thy house
Thy glory, gracing with illustrious splendour
Thy children's steps, on that barbaric coast
The high-raised tomb had dignified thy dust,
And soothed our sorrows. In the realms beneath,
Thy friendly shade, amongst the friendly shades
That fell with honour there, had held its state
Majestic and revered, a king, next those
Whose awful power those darksome realms obey.
For to thy last of life thou wast a king,
The golden reins of empire graced thy hands,
And thy strong sceptre ruled a willing people.
But in the fields of Troy thou didst not fall,
Nor is thy tomb beside Scamander's stream
With those that perished by the hostile spear.
But, oh! I wish that they, by whom he fell,
Had first so fall'n; and he, though distant far,
Had heard the rumour of their bloody fate,
Secure himself, nor tangled in their snares.

CHOR. Treasures of gold, my child, are poor to this:
Thy words are greater than the greatest fortune.

And all her favours : from thy grief they spring.
But from this scourge a double clash is heard ;
One from th' assistant powers beneath the earth ;
One from those lords, those hated lords that rule us,
Whose rude, unhallowed hands are stained with blood :
This sounds most dreadful to this royal race.

ELEC. This, like a piercing arrow, wounds my soul.

CHOR. Supreme of gods, send from the realms of night
The slow-avenging Até ; bid her rise
To blast the fraudulent and audacious hands
Of impious mortals ; for a father's wrongs
She stamps her vengeance deep. When on this man
The vengeful sword shall fall, and bleeding nigh
Lies this bad woman, be it mine to hear
Their shrieks of death, and answer to their cries
In notes as dismal. Why should I conceal
My honest hopes ? Fate spreads her sable wings,
And hovers o'er their heads ; before their eyes
Stands indignation armed, and hate enraged,
Ready to rend their hearts, when Jove shall stretch
His puissant hands. O thou, whose power subdues
The mighty, to this country seal thy faith,
And ratify their doom ! On th' impious heads
I ask for vengeance. You, whose dreaded power
Th' infernal realms revere, ye Furies, hear me !
There is a law that, for each drop of blood
Shed on the earth, demands that blood be shed ;
For, from the slain, Erinnyes calls for slaughter,
On ruin heaping ruin. Ye dread powers
Of Hell's dark realms, where are you now ? Behold,
Ye potent curses of the slain, behold
The poor remains of this imperial house
Sunk in distress, and all its glories vanished !
Where, King of Heaven, where may we seek for refuge ?

ELEC. Again my throbbing heart sinks at the sound
 Of thy laments ; and dark'ning o'er my soul
 At thy sad voice comes anguish and despair.
 But when thy words breathe courage, my sick griefs
 Are fled, and fairer fortune seems to smile.
 But with what words to woo her? Speak aloud
 The miseries which we suffer from our parents?
 Or smooth our tongues to glozing courtesy?
 That softens not our miseries : and our spirits,
 Roused by the wrongs of our ungentle mother,
 Contract a wolfish fierceness. With bold hand
 She struck the stroke, bold as the Cissian dame
 Trained to the warrior's arms. She struck him once ;
 Again she struck him ; her uplifted hands
 Redoubled blow on blow ; swift on his head
 The distant-sounding strokes with steep force fell.
 Bold unrelenting woman, that could bear
 Without one pitying sigh t' entomb the king
 Unhonoured with his people's grief, the husband
 Without a tear to grace his obsequies.

ORES. All thou hast mentioned are indignities
 That swell my grief to rage. But vengeance arms
 This hand, assisted by the gods, to punish
 Th' ignominious wrongs done to my father.
 May this revenge be mine, then let me die !

ELEC. When she had killed, with barbarous hands she
 His manly figure, and with this abuse [mangled
 Entombed him here, studious to make his murder
 A deed of horror, that through all thy life
 Might shock thy soul. Such was thy father's death,
 Such were thy father's ignominious wrongs.
 But me, a poor, deserted, worthless thing,
 Spurned like a mischievous cur from my apartments,
 They bid begone : there I could heave the sigh

In secret, there indulge the mournful pleasure
To pour the tear unnoticed, and unchecked.
Hear this, and on thy mind imprint it deep,
Engrave it on the tablet of thy heart ;
Be resolute, and calm. These things are thus :
Know this, and let thine indignation rise :
The time demands a firm, determined spirit.
And thou, my father, hear ; on thee I call,
And with a friendly voice, though choked with tears,
Hear us, and aid !

CHOR. And with a friendly voice this social train
To her sad voice accords the strain.
Hear, mighty shade, and from the realms of night
Revisit this ethereal light ;
Against thy foes impart thy aid,
Be war with war, and blood with blood repaid ;
Ye gods, with justice strike the blow !
I tremble as the measures flow ;
But fate attends, and hears our call,
And, stern the bloody forfeit to demand,
With fury arms the kindred hand,
And bids the righteous vengeance fall.
Here sorrow holds her dismal state,
Unsated murder stains the ground,
Revenge behind and terror wait,
And desolation stalks his round ;
Not with a distant foe the war to wage,
But on this house to pour their rage.
These are the strains, that to the gods below,
Th' avenging gods, in rude notes flow :
Hear us, dread powers ; and this imperial race,
Victorious in your might, with glory grace !

ORES. My royal father, who unroyally
Wast murdered, give me to command thy house !

ELEC. Hear me, my father, for I want thy aid ;
 Grant me to share his vengeance on Ægisthus,
 And then escape ; so may the solemn feast
 Be spread to thee ; else when the grateful odours
 Are wafted from the festive board, to grace
 The mighty dead, thy shade must want its honours.
 To thee this hand shall bring the costliest off'rings,
 To thee shall consecrate whate'er of wealth
 Ought, from thy treasures, to adorn my nuptials ;
 And with the holiest reverence grace thy tomb.

ORES. Earth, send my father to behold the combat !

ELEC. Inspire him, Proserpine, with glorious force !

ORES. Think on the bath where thou wast murdered,
 father !

ELEC. Think on the net in which they murdered thee !

ORES. Toils, other than of brass, entangle thee.

ELEC. Th' inexplicable robe's accursed contrivance.

ORES. My father, cannot these dishonours raise thee ?

ELEC. Dost thou not raise thy honoured head ? O send
 Justice to aid thy friends : or if thy soul
 Sinks with its wrongs, nor rises to avenge them,
 Be the like sufferings ours ! But, O my father,
 Hear our last cries, and sitting on thy tomb
 Behold thy children : pity my weak sex,
 Pity his manly sorrow, nor extinguish
 Th' illustrious line of Pelops : so in death
 Thou dost not die : for children, when the tomb
 Demands the parent, with surviving glory
 Preserve his fame ; the corks that buoy the line,
 And save the net from sinking to the bottom.
 O hear us ; for thy sake we pour these plaints.
 Thou shalt preserve thy glory, if with honour
 Thou hear our words, our blameless words, that honour
 The fortune of thy tomb, else unlamented !

Now, brother, since thy soul is roused to dare
This deed, trust on the god, and do it straight.

ORES. I shall : but let me pause awhile to ask
Wherefore she sent these off'rings, on what motive
Thus late she soothes th' immedicable ill,
Paying his wretched honour to the dead
That cares not for it. What these presents mean
Surpasses my conjecture, but her crime
Outweighs their worth ; for all, that can be offered
T' atone for one man's blood, is spent in vain.
Yet, if you know, explain her motives to me.

CHOR. I know, for I was present : dreams and visions,
The terrors of the night appalled her soul ;
Her guilty fears urged her to send these off'rings.

ORES. Told she the dreams, that so alarmed her fears ?

CHOR. She fancied she had giv'n a dragon birth.

ORES. And what was the event ? Tell me in brief.

CHOR. This new-born dragon, like an infant child
Laid in the cradle seemed in want of food ;
And in her dream she held it to her breast.

ORES. Without a wound 'scaped she the hideous monster ?

CHOR. The milk he drew was mixed with clotted blood.

ORES. 'Tis not for nought this vision from her husband.

CHOR. She cried out in her sleep with the affright ;
And many lamps, dim-gleaming the darkness,
To do her pleasure entered the apartment.
Soon to the tomb she sends these funeral honours,
Medicinal, as she hopes to heal her ills.

ORES. But to this earth, and to my father's tomb
I make my supplications, that in me
Her dream may be accomplished ; and I judge
It aptly corresponds : for as this serpent,
Leaving the place that once was mine, and laid
Swathed like an infant, seized that breast which nursed

My tender age, and mingled with the milk
Drew clotted blood ; and as with the affright
She called out in her sleep ; it cannot be,
But as she nursed this monster, she must die
A violent death ; and with a dragon's rage
This hand shall kill her, as her dream declares.
Or how wilt thou expound these prodigies ?

CHOR. Thus may it be. But now instruct thy friends
What each must singly do, and each not do.

ORES. Few words suffice : then mark me : let HER enter ;
And keep, I charge thee, keep my purpose secret :
That they, who slew an honourable man
By cursed deceit, may by deceit be caught
In the same snare, and perish ; so the god,
Powerful Apollo, from whose sacred voice
Nothing but truth can flow, admonished me.
I, like a stranger, harnessed in this coarse
And way-worn garb, with Pylades my friend,
Will as a guest and friend knock at the gate :
Our tongues shall imitate the rustic accent
Familiar to the mountain-race of Phocis.
Nor will the servants, 'tis a villanous house,
Receive us cheerfully ; but as we are,
There shall we stand ; while each that passes by,
With shrewd remarks shall shake his head, and say,
Why are these strangers thus inhospitably
Excluded from the gates, if their arrival
Ægisthus knows 'midst his domestic train ?
But if I pass the threshold of the gates,
And find him seated on my father's throne,
Or should he come t' accost me, be assured
Quick as the eye can glance, ere he can say
Whence is this stranger ? my impatient sword
Shall strike him dead. So shall the fell Erinnyes,

That with a horrid joy riots in slaughter,
 Quaff this third bowl of blood.—Go then, Electra,
 Be watchful : see that all things in the house
 Be well disposed. And you, I charge you guard
 Your tongues ; be silent where you ought, and where
 Your voice can aid me, speak. The rest, my friend,
 That guides my sword to vengeance, will o'ersee.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Pregnant with ills the dreary air
 Gives sickness, pain, and terror birth :
 The seas that wind around the earth,
 Fatal to man their hideous monsters bear :
 Each forest in its shaggy sides,
 That darkens o'er the perilous ground,
 The lurking, rav'nous savage hides,
 Whilst fierce birds wheel the summits round :
 And mark with what tempestuous rage
 Black from the skies the rushing winds engage.

Antistrophe 1.

But who the dangerous thoughts can tell
 That in man's daring bosom roll ;
 Or whirl the more tempestuous soul
 Of woman, when the tyrant passions swell ?
 When love, to torment near allied,
 Bids frenzy rule the troubled hour ?
 Love, that exerts with wanton pride
 O'er female hearts despotic power ;
 And binds in his ungentle chain
 Each savage of the wood, each monster of the main.

Strophe 2.

Think with what sullen frenzy fired
 The Thestian dame with ruthless hand :
 Cast on the hearth the fatal brand ;
 The flames consumed it, and her son expired.
 With horror think on Scylla's deed :
 To win the favour of the foes,
 The golden bracelets were the meed,
 Against her father's life she rose,
 Approached the sleeping monarch's bed,
 And reft the sacred honours of his head.

Antistrophe 2.

Amongst these deeds of blood, that stain
 The annals of the times of old,
 Be that unhallowed couch enrolled,
 Whose guilty loves this royal house profane.
 Enrolled be all that female hate
 Formed 'gainst the chief in arms renowned ;
 The chief, whose glorious, awful state
 Foes 'midst their rage with reverence owned :
 Those glories, though they blaze no more,
 Quenched by a woman's hand I still adore.

Epode.

In the black annals of far distant time
 The Lesbian dames recorded stand ;
 But the soul shudders at the crime,
 And execrates the murders of their hand :
 Basely at once the husbands bleed ;
 Th' indignant gods abhor the deed.
 And shall man dare with impious voice t' approve
 Deeds that offend the powers above ?

Through the gored breast
 With rage imprest
 The sword of justice hews the dreadful wound ;
 And haughty might
 That mocks at right,
 Like the vile dust is trampled on the ground.
 Righteous are thy decrees, eternal king,
 And from the roots of justice spring :
 These shall strike deep, and flourish wide,
 Whilst all that scorn them, perish in their pride.
 Fate the portentous sword prepares,
 And the rough labours of the anvil shares ;
 Wide through the house a tide of blood
 Flows where a former tide had flowed ;
 Erinnys marks the destined hour,
 Vengeful her meditated rage to pour.

ORES. What, does no servant hear me knock ? Within
 Who waits ? Again I knock : does no one hear ?
 A third time to the servants of this house
 I call, if to the stranger at his gate
 The great Ægisthus bears a courteous soul.

SER. Forbear ; I hear. Who art thou, and from whence ?

ORES. Go tell the lords of this fair house, to them
 I come, charged with strange tidings : haste ;
 For now the sable chariot of the night
 Rolls on apace ; and the dark hour exhorts
 The way-spent traveller to repose beneath
 The hospitable roof. Call forth the matron,
 That has the charge of these domestic cares ;
 More decent, if a man ; for modesty
 There checks the falt'ring tongue, but to a man
 More confident a man speaks free and open.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. Speak, strangers, what your wants;
here shall you find

All that becomes a house like this ; warm baths,
Refreshment of your toils, the well-spread couch
Inviting soft repose, and over all
An eye regarding justice. If your business
Be of more serious import, asking counsel,
The province this of men ; we will inform them.

ORES. A Phocian am I, from the town of Daulis.
Occasions of my own called me to Argos,
Nor asked a better dress, than this coarse garb
Familiar to me ; onwards as I travelled
I met a man unknown, myself to him
Unknown ; he courteous questioned me how far
I journeyed, and informed me of my way,
Strophius of Phocis, so I chanced to learn ;
Stranger, says he, since business of thy own
Leads thee to Argos, let me charge thy honour
To tell his parents that the young Orestes
Is dead. Forget it not. Whether his friends
With solemn obsequies will fetch him hence,
Or in eternal rest our friendly earth
Shall lay him in her hospitable bosom,
Bring back their pleasure ; for the brazen urn
Now holds the ashes of the honoured youth,
Whom we lament. This, faithful to my charge,
Have I delivered ; if to kindred ears,
And those, whose power is sovereign here, I know not.
But it is meet his parent knew th' event.

ELEC. Ah me ! Thus desolation on our head
Is fall'n. O thou relentless curse, whos' rage
Hung o'er this house, has thy unsparing eye

Marked what we lodged at distance, aiming there
 Thy cruel shafts, to rob me of my friends?
 E'en now Orestes, who with cautious tread
 Had from this gulf of ruin freed his foot,
 E'en he, the hope medicinal to the madness
 Of this ill house, shows that our hope betrays us.

ORES. It were my wish to have borne other tidings,
 More welcome to the lords of this fair mansion,
 And meriting their hospitable favours :
 For what more strongly to benevolence
 Can bind the grateful soul ! Yet I should deem it
 An impious wrong not to disclose even these,
 Unwelcome, as they must be, to his friends,
 So solemnly intrusted to my charge.

CLY. Not less for this shalt thou receive such usage
 As thy worth challenges : not less for this
 Respected here : another would have come
 Charged with the same sad message. But the hour
 Demands refreshment for the stranger, spent
 With the long travel of the weary day.
 Lead him to those apartments, where the men
 Are well received ; let his attendant follow,
 His fellow-traveller ; let thy diligent care,
 I charge thee, minister to all his wants.
 We to the rulers of this house will bear
 These tidings, and amongst our friends consult
 What measures in this sad event to form.

CHOR. [*alone*] Now, my dear partners, slaves to this proud
 Now let us show our fortitude, now teach [house,
 Our tongues a noble daring for Orestes.

Thou hallowed earth, thou hallowed mound,
 Whose high sepulchral round
 Lies on the royal chief, that o'er the main
 To glory led his martial train,

Now hear us, now impart your aid :
On this important hour,
Persuasion, try thy fraudulent power :
And thou, through night's surrounding shade,
Come, Mercury, from the shades below,
And when the falchion flames, direct th' avenging blow !

SERVANT, GILISSA, CHORUS.

SERVANT. This stranger, it should seem, brings mournful tidings ;

I see the tear steal from Gilissa's eye,
Nurse of Orestes. Wherefore dost thou pass
These doors ? The sorrows that attend thy steps,
Shall here find no reward : expect it not.

GIL. My royal mistress ordered me with speed
To call Ægisthus to these stranger guests ;
That man from man he with more certainty
Might learn this fresh report. Before the servants
She kept her smile beneath a mournful eye,
To hide her joy at this event ; to her
A joy indeed, but to this house a tale
Of deep affliction. He too, when he hears
The narrative, will from his soul rejoice.
Ah me ! what sorrows in successive train
Have in this house of Atreus pierced my soul
From ancient times : but never have I suffered
A loss like this : with patience other ills,
Well as I might, I bore. But my Orestes
Was the dear object of my anxious thoughts ;
An infant I received him from his mother ;
I nursed him, many a night to all his wants,
To all his cries attentive, with a care
That now avails me not : ere reason dawns,
The nurse's care is needful ; in his cradle

The infant knows not to express his wants,
 Rise they from thirst, or hunger, or the calls
 Of nature : with fond diligence I marked
 Th' instinctive cry, nor with a squeamish niceness
 Thought scorn of any office ; for my love
 Made all delightful. Now, unhappy me !
 My dear Orestes is, I hear, no more.
 But I am sent in haste to that vile man,
 Whose rank pollution stains this noble house :
 With pleasure this report will he receive.

CHOR. With what appointment does she bid him come ?

GIL. Appointment ! Let me comprehend thy meaning.

CHOR. If with his train of guards, or unattended.

GIL. She bids him come attended with his guards.

CHOR. No, tell him not, this hated lord ; but wear
 A face of cheerfulness ; and urge him hither
 Alone, devoid of fear, to be informed.
 For the mind catches from the messenger
 A secret elevation, and bold swell.

GIL. This news, it seems, is welcome to thy soul.

CHOR. But what if Heaven's high King redress these ills ?

GIL. How ? With Orestes all our hopes are dead.

CHOR. Not all. This needs no prophet to unfold it.

GIL. Hast thou heard aught disproving this report ?

CHOR. Go, bear thy message ; do as thou art ordered ;
 The gods, whose care this is, will guide th' event.

GIL. I go, in all observant of thy precepts,
 May what is best come from the fav'ring gods !

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Now my righteous prayer approve,
 Father and King of gods, Olympian Jove !

To thee may I unfold
 Such vows, as from the modest and the wise
 In the cause of justice rise.
 Oh, may these eyes behold
 Her power, adored by all, maintain
 The glories of her awful reign !
 Hear me, monarch of the sky,
 Protect him with thy guardian care ;
 O'er his foes exalt him high,
 That lord it in the regal chair !
 His ruined honours thus restored,
 With fiercer rage thy vengeance shall be poured.

Antistrophe.

Yoked to affliction's iron car
 This orphan son of a loved father spare :
 Restrain its headlong force ;
 And let the rapid wheels, with many a bound
 Rolling o'er the rugged ground,
 Here stop their painful course.
 And you that guard this royal seat,
 Its blazing wealth, its gorgeous state,
 Hear, propitious gods, and save !
 Let not the blood of former slain
 Fresh returns of vengeance crave ;
 No more these crimsoned mansions stain :
 Slaughter no more from slaughter rise,
 If low beneath the righteous sword he lies !

Monostrophe.

Thou, that hast fixed thy dreary reign
 Deep in the yawning gulf below,
 Yet let him rise, yet view this scene,
 Around his gloomy eyeballs throw,

Distinct and clear the vengeance mark,
 That threatens from her covert dark !
 Thou, son of Maia, come, and with thee lead
 Success, that crowns the daring deed :
 To form the close and dark design,
 Whether th' ambiguous tale thou lov'st to weave,
 And throw around the veil of night ;
 Or bid'st ev'n truth itself deceive,
 Displayed in all the dazzling blaze of light ;
 The powers of secrecy are thine.
 Then shall this pensive female train
 These rich oblations pay no more ;
 No more the melancholy strain,
 Tuned to the voice of anguish, pour.
 Raptured their triumph shall I see,
 My friends from ruffian danger free.
 And thou, when thy stern part is come, be bold
 Think how in blood thy father rolled :
 And when, " my son, my son," she cries,
 To melt thy manly mind with plaintive moan,
 Then to her guilty soul recall
 Thy murdered father's dying groan ;
 And to his angry vengeance let her fall :
 Like Perseus turn thy ruthless eyes ;
 Just to thy friends above, thy friends below,
 Aim with applauded rage the destined wound ;
 Great in thy vengeance rush upon the foe,
 And strike the murd'rer bleeding to the ground.

ÆGISTHUS, GILISSA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS. This message has a voice, that calls me forth
 To learn with more assurance this report,
 By certain strangers brought, touching the death
 Of young Orestes ; most unwelcome this ;

And the relation to this house will add
 Fresh terror to the fear, whose unhealed wound
 Smarts inwardly, and rankles. Should I give
 Full credit to this tale, or rather deem it
 The idle offspring of these women's fears,
 That lightly rose, and will as lightly die?
 Tell me, what proof gives credit to this rumour?

GIL. Indeed we heard it: but go in, examine
 These strangers; less regard is due to rumour,
 Than to clear information learnt from them.

ÆGIS. I wish to see this stranger, and to ask him
 If he himself was present at his death,
 Or only speaks from an obscure report.
 Deception finds no easy entrance here.

CHOR. What should I say, eternal King,
 Or how begin the strain?
 These passions how contain,
 That in my throbbing breast tumultuous spring?
 O that, in aid, my daring deed
 Might all the force of words exceed!
 For now distained with blood the bick'ring sword
 The contest ends; if all
 This royal race shall fall;
 Or the just laws their ancient state resuming,
 And liberty her light reluming,
 Hail to his father's rights the son restored.
 'Gainst two fierce wolves the youth contesting stands
 Alone: may heaven-sent conquest grace his hands!

ÆGIS. [*within*] Oh! I am slain.

CHOR. That groan! Again that groan!
 Whence? What is done? Who rules the storm within?
 The deed is finished: let us keep aloof,
 And seem unconscious of these ills: best stand
 At distance, whilst destruction ends her work.

SER. Woe, woe to me ! Woe to my slaughtered lord !
 Woe on my wretched head, and woe again !
 Ægisthus is no more. But open here,
 Ye females, instantly unbar these doors ;
 Th' occasion calls for vigour, not t' assist
 The slain. Ho, here ! What, call I to the deaf ?
 Or sleep you ? Where is Clytemnestra ? How
 Employed ? Her life stands at the sword's bare point,
 And ready vengeance seems to prompt the blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA, SERVANT, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. What means thy clamour ? Whence
 these shrieks of woe ?

SER. They that were rumoured dead have slain the living.

CLY. Ah me ! I understand thee, though thy words
 Are dark ; and we shall perish in the toils,
 E'en as we spread them. Give me instantly
 The slaught'ring axe ; it shall be seen if yet
 We know the way to conquer, or are conquered :
 These daring measures have my wrongs enforced.

ORESTES, PYLADES, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES. Thee too I seek. He has his righteous meed

CLY. Ah me ! my dear Ægisthus ; thou art dead.

ORES. And dost thou love the man ? In the same tomb
 Shalt thou be laid, nor ev'n in death forsake him.

CLY. Ah, stay thy hand, my son : my child, my child,
 Revere this breast, on which thou oft hast slept,
 And oft thy infant lips have pressed its milk.

ORES. What shall I do, my Pylades ? Restrained
 By filial reverence, dread to kill my mother ?

PYL. Where then the other oracles of Phœbus,
 Given from the Pythian shrine ? The faithful vows,
 The solemn adjurations, whither vanished ?
 Deem all the world thy foes, save the just gods.

ORES. Thou hast convinced me ; thy reproofs are just.
Follow him : on his body will I slay thee.
Alive thou heldst him dearer than my father ;
Then sleep with him in death, since thou couldst love him,
And hate the man who most deserved thy love.

CLY. I nursed thy youth, and wish to tend thy age.

ORES. What, shall my father's murd'rer dwell with me ?

CLY. The Fates, my son, the Fates decreed his death.

ORES. And the same Fates decree that thou shalt die.

CLY. Dost thou not dread a mother's curse, my son ?

ORES. That mother cast me out to want and misery.

CLY. Not so ; I sent thee to a friendly house.

ORES. Though nobly born, a slave, and doubly sold.

CLY. What in exchange, what price did I receive ?

ORES. I blush to charge thee with the guilty price.

CLY. Blush not ; but with it name thy father's lightness.

ORES. Sitting in wanton ease, blame not his toils.

CLY. Barred from our husbands, irksome are our hours.

ORES. Yet in your ease your husbands' toils support you.

CLY. My son, my son, thou wilt not kill thy mother !

ORES. Thy hand, not mine, is guilty of thy death.

CLY. Take heed ; avoid a mother's angry Furies.

ORES. Relaxing here, how shall I 'scape my father's ?

CLY. Methinks while yet alive before my tomb

I pour the funeral strain, that nought avails me.

ORES. Nought : for my father's fate ordains thy death.

CLY. Ah me ! I gave this dragon birth, I nursed him :
These terrors of the night were more than phantoms.

ORES. Foul and unnatural was thy murd'rous deed :
Foul and unnatural be thy punishment.

CHOR. [*alone*] The double ruin ev'n of these awakes
Our grief. But since his cruel fate has plunged
Orestes deep in blood, pour we the prayer
That his fair day set not in endless night,

Strophe.

Revenge at length is come, though slow her pace,
For Priam's ruined race.
In Agamemnon's royal hall,
Roused by the Pythian god's inspiring call,
The glorious exile stands ;
With lion port, with martial mien,
Such as the god of war is seen,
The sword of justice light'ning in his hands,
Fired by the prompting voice divine,
That thundered from the shrine,
Dauntless he dared these dangerous courts to tread.
Hark ! 'tis his voice : the walls around
His cheerful shouts resound :
No more the tyrants' malice shall he dread ;
The tyrants' lavish hands no more
Shall waste his treasured store ;
No more their pride usurp his throne,
Low in the dust their hostile pride o'erthrown.

Antistrophe.

With dark and secret fraud HIS coward mind
The bloody deed designed.
Revenge, with solemn steps and slow
Advancing, meditates the secret blow ;
Daughter of Heaven's high lord,
Though by the name of Justice known
Her sovereign power weak mortals own,
She guides his hand, she points his thund'ring sword ;
And rushing with impetuous might
Assists him in the fight,
Breathing destructive fury on his foes.
Nor less 'gainst HER whose treacherous hand
This injured house profaned,

From his deep shrine with fury Phœbus glows.
For ev'n the gods with sacred awe
Revere this righteous law,
To spurn the guilt that asks their aid :
And be this Heaven-commanding law obeyed.

Epode.

Cheerful the light begins to rise.
Sunk was our sun, and long in darkness lay,
Nor promised the return of day :
Soon may his beams revisit our sad eyes !
When these cleansed floors no more retain
Polluting murder's sanguine stain,
Time haply may behold his orient rays
O'er these illumined turrets blaze ;
And fortune, mounted on her golden seat,
Rejoice in our triumphant State,
Rejoice to see our glories rise,
And our unclouded sun flame o'er the sapphire skies.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORESTES. Behold the proud oppressors of my country,
The murderers of my father, the destroyers
Of his imperial house : commanding awe
When seated on their thrones, retaining yet
Their loves, of their affection if with truth
Hence we conjecture aught, and their oath stands
Inviolatè ; for to my father's death
They formed th' unhallowed compact, and to die
Together : these events confirm their oath.
Behold again, you that attentive mark
These ills, behold this artifice, the toils
That tangled hand and foot my suffering father.
This was his vestment ; form a ring around it,

Spread it, display it to th' all-seeing sun,
That with his awful eye he may behold
My mother's impious deeds, and in the hour
Of judgment be my witness that with justice
My vengeance fell on her. As for Ægisthus,
I reckon not of his death ; a sacred law
He dared pollute ; and justly has he paid
The dreadful penalty. She 'gainst her husband,
Once the dear object of her love, to which
Her swelling zone bore many a precious pledge,
Now flamed with ranc'rous hate, and murd'rous malice.
What noxious monster, what envenomed viper,
That poisons with a touch th' unwounded body,
E'er breathed such pestilent and baleful rage ?
You view that vestment : tell me now, were all
The powers of language mine, what should I call it ?
Toils planted for a savage ? Or the bands
That for the tomb enwrap the dead ? A curse
Well may you call it, and the gives of Hell.
Such may the pilferer wear, the thievish slave
That pillages his guests, and trains his life
To plunder ; such the ruffian, whose rude hand
Prompted to murd'rous deeds is stained with blood.
Never, ye gods, may such a woman share
My bed : no. rather childless let me perish !

CHOR. O horror, horror ! Dreadful were your deeds,
And dreadful is your death ; the ling'ring vengeance
Burst with redoubled force. This was her deed,
Her cursed deed : this vestment is my witness,
Tinged by Ægisthus' sword ; the gushing blood,
Now stiffened, stains its Tyrian-tinctured radiance.
Now I applaud his just revenge ; now weep,
Viewing this bloody robe, and mourn these deeds,
The suff'rings of this house, and e'en this conquest,

Dreadful atonement ! Never shall the life
Of mortal man be passed uncharged with ills :
On some with rapid rage the tempest rolls ;
Slowly on some the gath'ring clouds advance.

ORES. Be that another's care : I see the doom
Assigned to me. For as the rapid car
Whirled from the course by the impetuous steeds
That scorn the reins, so my exulting heart
Bounds with tumultuous and ungoverned passions.
Yet let me plead, whilst reason holds its seat,
Plead to my friends that in the cause of justice
I slew my mother ; for her impious hands,
Stained with my father's blood, called down revenge
From the offended gods. And here I plead,
To mitigate the deed, the Pythian prophet,
Phœbus, whose voice pronounced me from the shrine,
If I achieved the vengeance, free from guilt ;
To my refusal dreadful was his threat
Of punishments, beyond the reach of thought.
Graced with this branch of olive, and this wreath,
I will approach his shrine, his central throne,
And his eternal fires, there to be cleansed
From the pollution of this kindred blood :
No other roof receives me ; so the god
Enjoined. Meanwhile let Argos be informed,
And all this people witness what a weight
Of miseries oppressed me : dead or living,
A vagrant, and an exile from my country,
I leave these words behind me ; having done
What honour gave in charge, I shall not blush
Hearing my fame reviled, nor bear in absence
The tongue of obloquy, the State of Argos
Freed by this hand, that boldly crushed these dragons.
Ha ! look, ye female captives, what are these

Vested in sable stoles, of Gorgon aspect,
Their starting locks tangled with knots of vipers !
I fly, I fly ; I cannot bear the sight.

CHOR. What phantoms, what unreal shadows thus
Distract thee ? Victor in thy father's cause,
To him most dear, start not at fancied terrors.

ORES. These are no phantoms, no unreal shadows ;
I know them now ; my mother's angry Furies.

CHOR. The blood as yet is fresh upon thy hands,
And thence these terrors sink into thy soul.

ORES. Royal Apollo, how their numbers swell !
And the foul gore drops from their hideous eyes.

CHOR. Within are lavers. Soon as thou shalt reach
His shrine, Phœbus will free thee from these ills.

ORES. And see you nothing there ? Look, look ! I see
them.

Distraction's in the sight ! I fly, fly !

CHOR. Blest may'st thou be : and may the god whose eye
Looks on thee, guard thee in these dreadful dangers !

Thrice on this royal house the bursting storm
Hath poured its rage in blood. Thyestes first
Mourned for his slaughtered sons. Th' imperial lord,
The leader of the martial hosts of Greece,
Next fell beneath the murd'ring sword, and stained
Th' ensanguined bath. Then came th' intrepid youth
Armed with the sword—of Freedom should I say,
Or Fate ? How long shall vengeance pour her terrors ?
When curb her fiery rage, and sleep in peace ?

THE FURIES.

It is pleasant enough to observe with what heat the critics rise against this tragedy. C'est si bizarre.—L'unité de lieu n'est pas gardée dans cette pièce : mais ce n'est pas-là qui choque le plus.—Tota œconomia dramatis impia est et inepta.—Hic uno momento tota scenæ facies mutatur, et pro Delphis ac templo Apollinis Delphici habemus Athenas et templum Minervæ Athenis. Nihil ineptius aut inconcinnius excogitari posset.—The poet, it seems, had dared to violate the unities ; and further, has introduced personages of so extravagant a character as to baffle the skill of these literary martinets, and to whip them from their foining fence ; hinc illæ lachrymæ. Æschylus in all his other pieces that remain to us, has paid the strictest attention to these favourite unities ; and with reason ; he was their father, and knew their merit as well as any man : even here, where his management of the subject led him to treat them with less respect, he has softened the violation by a kind of magic power. Apollo and the Furies must be allowed the liberty to transport themselves whither and when they please : and Mercury has the charge of conducting Orestes ; so that had Horace wrote,

Ille per extentum funem mihi posse videtur
Ire poëta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,

Inritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet

Ut magus ; et modo me DELPHIS, modo ponit Athenis,

the allusion would have added a wonderful propriety to the expression, and the lines have conveyed a just character of this tragedy. However a French or a Dutch critic may be shocked at this change of scene, to an Athenian nothing could be more agreeable than to see a contest, which Apollo could not compose at Delphos, brought before the great council of his own city, the god in person attending and pleading in the cause. That respect to his country, which distinguishes our noble poet above all the writers of antiquity, has an irresistible charm. "Rules, art, decorum, all fall before it. It goes directly to the heart, and gains all purposes at once." The English reader feels this in its full force, and Æschylus is acquitted of the charge of having violated a unity. As these dreadful sisters were the ministers of the offended gods, to execute their vengeance on impious mortals stained with blood, just, impartial, and of resistless power, they were held in the highest reverence : as they were cruel, implacable, and delighted with their terrible office, they were detested, and abhorred by gods and men : this accounts for the very different treatment they here meet with. For the rest, let P. Brumoy be the poet's advocate. "On sent assez que les traits rude et un peu grossiers de cette pièce sont fort opposés à notre goût, et au vray goût du théâtre. Mais il ne faut pas confondre parmi ces traits, ce qui regarde uniquement les mœurs et les idées des Grecs. Le ronflement des Furies, et ce spectacle des monstres difformes, ne vaut du tout rien. Cependant, comme c'étoient des Divinités respectable pour les Grecs, ils les voyoient avec d'autre yeux que nous. A plus forte raison devoient-ils être moins choqués de voir Apollon plaider pour Oreste, et Minerve jouer le rôle qu'elle joue. Tout cela étoit dans leur genie ; et il est nécessaire

qu'on s'en rapproche autant qu'il est possible, pour ne pas trouver ridicule une tragédie qui ne l'étoit certainement pas au goût du peuple LE PLUS POLI DE L'UNIVERS."

Had these critics explained the motives which induced this venerable court to acquit Orestes, from the laws and usages of ancient times, they would have been better employed: but not a word of this. This curious inquiry was reserved for a writer of a very different genius; and the reader will thank me for referring him to the notes on the Epistle to the Pisos, v. 127.

This foul sisterhood on the Athenian stage amounted to fifty: the consternation arising from their hideous figures, and gestures, and yellings, had such fatal effects upon the children et les femmes enceintes, that the State by an express law reduced the number of the Chorus to fifteen, and afterwards to twelve. But the translator dares assure the English ladies, for whom he has too great a respect to offer them anything that can have the least tendency to hurt them, that they may read this play with the utmost safety. These ancient virgins are, to be sure, at first a little wayward, and rather outrageous; but they soften by degrees, till they become perfectly good-humoured, and the best company in the world. He flatters himself that he needs not make any apology for passing so slightly over ces ronflements redoublés des Furies, which are marked with great exactness in the original; nor for an omission of somewhat a similar nature in the last scene of the "Persians," He has taken the liberty to change the position of a few lines, where the Furies quit the temple of Apollo: which to him appeared necessary.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS.

APOLLO.

MINERVA.

THE GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

ORESTES.

CHORUS, THE FURIES.

SCENE, the Vestibule of the Temple of the Pythian Apollo.

THE PRIESTESS.

WITH reverence first to th' Earth I pray these vows,
 The first prophetic power : to Themis next,
 Who next her mother held, they say, this seat
 Oracular : Titanian Phœbe then,
 She too the daughter of the Earth, unforced
 Assumed this seat ; to Phœbus at his birth
 Rich gifts, in honour of the day, she brought,
 And graced him with her name ; the Delian rock,
 The lake he left, and anchored in the port
 Sacred to Pallas : thence to this fair region,
 And high Parnassus, held his solemn march :
 Attendant on his state the sons of Vulcan
 With reverend awe prepare his way, and tame
 The rude and savage earth ; the joyful people
 Hail his arrival, and the sceptred Delphus,
 Lord of this realm, adored the passing god :
 With his own sacred skill high Jove inspired
 His raptured soul, and placed him on his throne,
 The fourth prophetic god, whence now he gives
 His father's oracles : to these I raise
 My first-breathed vows. Nor less Pronæan Pallas
 Demands her meed of praise. Next I adore
 The nymphs, that in Corycia's caverned rocks
 Loved haunt of soaring birds, in rustic state
 Have fixed their residence ; though Bacchus claims

The rude domain : my memory now recalls
With what a port he led his raging nymphs
To havoc, when devoted Pentheus fled
Affrighted, as a hare before his hunters.
The fountains next of Plistus, and the power
Of Neptune I invoke ; and lastly thee,
Supreme, all-perfect Jove ! These rites performed,
As priestess of the shrine I reassume
My sacred seat. Frequented as of old
Be this oracular fane ; and may the gods
Grant me auspicious answers : if from Greece
Th' inquirers, pleased return they with the Fates !
But my voice utters, what the god inspires.

[She enters the Temple and returns affrighted.]

Things horrible to tell, and horrible
To sight, have forced me from the fane again :
Trembling with fear my lax limbs ill support
My frame, save that my hands with eager grasp
Uphold my sinking weakness as I pass.
As to the shrine with many a garland crowned
I bend my age-enfeebled steps, beneath
The central dome I see a man abhorred
By the just gods, a suppliant it should seem,
For such his posture ; but his hands are stained
With blood, in one he holds a new-drawn sword,
High in the other crowned with ample wreaths
An olive branch, with wreaths of snowy wool
Handsomely wrought ; thus far I speak assured.
Before him lies a troop of hideous women
Stretched on the seats, and sleeping ; yet not women,
But Gorgons rather, nor the Gorgon form
Exactly representing, as I have seen them
Drawn by the painter's imitative pencil,
Snatching the viands from the board of Phineus.

These have not wings, but clothed in sable stoles,
 Abhorred and execrable ; as they sleep
 Hoarse in their hollow throats their harsh breath rattles,
 And their galled eyes a rheumy gore distil.
 Ill suit such loathsome weeds the hallowed fane
 Graced with the forms of sculptured gods, ill suit
 The roofs of men ; so foul a sisterhood
 Till now I never saw, no land can boast
 To have produced a breed so horrible,
 But toils, and groans, and mischiefs must ensue.
 But here Apollo reigns ; his awful power
 Guards his own fane, auspicious to disclose
 The dark decrees of fate, to spread the glow
 Of vig'rous health, to breath th' ambrosial gales
 And chase from other mansions all that hurts.

[*The Temple opens.—APOLLO is seen.—ORESTES as a suppliant.—The FURIES in a deep sleep.*

APOL. No : I will not forsake thee : to the end
 My guardian care shall favour and assist thee
 Present, or distant far : but to thy foes
 I know not mercy. See this grisly troop,
 Sleep has oppressed them, and their baffled rage
 Shall fail, grim-visaged hags, grown old
 In loathed virginity : nor god, nor man
 Approached their bed, nor savage of the wilds ;
 For they were born for mischiefs, and their haunts
 In dreary darkness 'midst the yawning gulfs
 Of Tartarus beneath, by men abhorred,
 And by th' Olympian gods. Fly then, nor yield
 To weak distrust ; they, be thou sure, will follow
 With unremitting chase thy flying steps
 Wide wand'ring o'er the firm terrene, and o'er
 The humid sea, and wave-surrounded towns.
 But faint thou not, sink not beneath thy toils :

Fly to the city of Minerva, take
 Thy suppliant seat, with reverence in thy arms
 Grasp her time-honoured image. Holding there
 Concordant counsels, lenient of these ills,
 We shall not want the means to heal thy pains,
 And ratify thy peace : for at my bidding
 Thy sword is purple with thy mother's blood.

ORES. 'Tis not unknown to thee, royal Apollo,
 That I have done no deed of base injustice ;
 This known, forsake not, slight not my just cause ;
 Strong is thy power, and faithful to defend.

APOL. Remember ; let not fear unman thy mind.
 And thou, my brother, by our ties of blood,
 Our common parent, I adjure thee, Mercury,
 Protect him ; rightly if the name of guide
 Be thine, be thou his guide : defend my suppliant ;
 For Jove with reverence looks on mortal man,
 That awfully reveres our guiding power.

[*To the FURIES sleeping.*

THE GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

What, can you sleep? Is this a time to indulge
 Your indolent repose? Through your neglect
 I am dishonoured 'mongst the dead, reviled,
 For that I slew him with incessant taunts,
 And wander with disgrace : this infamy,
 I tell you, is through you : my horrid sufferings,
 From those most dear to me, excite no anger
 Of one offended god ; yet I was slain
 By my son's hand. With thy mind's eye behold
 These wounds : in sleep the vig'rous soul, set free
 From gross corporeal sense, with keener view
 Looks through the fate of mortals, dimly seen
 Through the day's troubled beam. Oft have ye tasted

My temperate off'rings mixed with fragrant honey,
 Grateful libations : oft the hallowed feast
 Around my hearth, at midnight's solemn hour,
 When not a god shared in your rites ; but this,
 All this I see disparaged now, and scorned ;
 And he is fled, light as the bounding roe,
 Burst from your nets, with many a bitter scoff.
 Hear me, O hear ! 'tis for my soul's repose
 I plead : rouse your keen sense, infernal powers,
 'Tis Clytemnestra calls you in your dreams.
 Deep is your sleep ; meanwhile he distant flies :
 I ask your aid ; else not a suppliant comes
 To interrupt your rest ; supine you lie
 In dead repose, nor pity my afflictions ;
 Meanwhile Orestes flies ; shall he escape,
 The murderer of his mother ? Sound thy sleep,
 And loud thy deep-drawn breath. Hast thou e'er done
 Aught but fell deeds of mischief ? Rouse, awake ;
 The terrors of the dragon lose their force,
 Quenched in the dark profound of toil and sleep.

CHOR. [*asleep*] Seize him there, seize him, seize him,
 take good heed.

CLY. In dreams dost thou pursue him, like the
 hound

That opens in his sleep, on th' eager chase
 Ev'n then intent. And is this all ? Awake,
 Arise : let not thy toil subdue thee ; know
 What loss ensues if sleep enfeebles thee ;
 And let these just reproaches sting thy mind,
 Incentives to the wise : with fiery breath,
 That snuffs the scent of blood, pursue this son,
 Follow him, blast him in the prosperous chase.

CHOR. [*awaking*] Awake, arise : rouse her as I rouse
 thee.

Yet dost thou sleep ? Leave thy repose ; arise :
Look we if this firm guard hath been in vain.

Ha, sisters, ha ! 'tis base, 'tis foul ;
Vain is our labour, vain our care :
This insult stings my tortured soul,
Untaught contempt and wrong to bear.
Whilst overpowered with sleep I lay,
Burst from the net escapes the prey.

Great triumph, treach'rous son of Jove,
In youth's fresh prime to mock my age !
Thee could this impious suppliant move
(And thou a god) whose cruel rage
Plunged in his mother's breast his sword ?
Yet thou hast screened the wretch abhorred.

Clashing her scourge with hideous sound
Reproach upon my slumbers stole ;
Deep in my heart impressed the wound,
Ev'n yet chill horror shakes my soul.
These are the deeds in misrule's hour
When youthful gods usurp the power.

See all defiled with gore thy throne,
There sate the murderer dropping blood.
Yet these pollutions are thy own ;
From thee the call, the impulse flowed :
Such grace, despised th' age-honoured Fates,
Your new unhallowed shrines awaits.

And shall this wretch in safety breathe,
Screened by thy power severe to me ;
No : let him fly the earth beneath,
Never, he never shall be free :
No : as he dared this murd'rous deed,
Murder shall fall upon his head.

APOL. Hence, I command you, from my hallowed seat
Be gone with speed ; quit this oracular shrine :
This is no place to snatch your winged serpents,
And hurl them from your golden-twisted string,
To wing the black blood from the human heart
With torture, then disgorge your horrid feast
Of clotted gore : such guests my house abhors.
Begone where vengeance with terrific rage
Digs out the eyes, or from the mangled trunk
Remorseless rends the head ; to slaughters go,
Abortions, lurking ambush, rampired force,
To sufferings, to impalements, where the wretch
Writhes on the stake in tortures, yelling loud,
With many a shriek : in feasts like these, ye hags
Abhorred, is your delight ; sufficient proof
That execrable form ; the desert wild,
Where the blood-rav'ning lion makes his den,
Such should inhabit ; nor with impure tread
Pollute these golden shrines : begone, and graze
Without a keeper ; for of such a herd
Th' indignant gods disdain to take the charge.

CHOR. Now, royal Phœbus, hear me speak : in this
Not an associate art thou, but alone
Thou didst this deed, and thine alone the blame.

APOL. Why this to me ? Inform me ; but be brief.

CHOR. Thy voice, pronounced from this oracular shrine,
Enjoined this wretch to shed his mother's blood.

APOL. Enjoined him to avenge his father's death.

CHOR. To this strange murder promised thy protection.

APOL. I charged him to seek refuge in this shrine.

CHOR. But these attendants thou with taunts insultest.

APOL. Unworthy they t' approach this sacred seat.

CHOR. Such was our charge : we come not uncommanded.

APOL. What is that honour? Make the glorious boast.

CHOR. To drive the murd'ers of their mothers hence.

APOL. What, fav'ring her, whose bold hand slew her husband?

CHOR. Nor should his hands be stained with kindred blood.

APOL. The sacred pledges of connubial Juno
And Jove hast thou disparaged, set at nought;
And Venus is disparaged by thy words.
From whom the dearest joys, that sweeten life,
Arise; for hallowed is the nuptial bed,
Of deeper sanctity than oaths, and guarded
By justice. If to those, whose mutual rage
Bathes in each other's blood, thy chast'ning hand
Is gentle; if thine eye looks milder on them,
Nor flames with wrath; unjustly does thy vengeance
Pursue Orestes; such I now behold
Thy threat'ning mien, to others more benign.
But Pallas, righteous queen, shall judge this cause.

CHOR. But never, never will I quit this man.

APOL. Pursue him then; to toil add fruitless toil.

CHOR. Think not thy words shall make my rage relent.

APOL. Shall thy rage touch him? No; I brook it not.

CHOR. At Jove's high throne thou art reputed great:
Yet, since a mother's blood calls loud for vengeance,
My keen pursuit shall trace him step by step.

APOL. To me his vows are paid; I will assist,
And set him free; for dreadful were the wrath
'Mongst gods and men, should I betray my suppliant.

CHOR. That moves not me.—These are his marks;
observe them,

Unerring guides, though tongueless: follow, follow,
And, like the hound that by the drops of blood
Traces the wounded hind, let us pursue him.

The Scene changes to the Temple of Minerva at Athens.

ORESTES.

Hither, divine Minerva, by the mandate
Of Phœbus am I come. Propitious power,
Receive me by the Furies' torturing rage
Pursued, no vile unhallowed wretch, nor stained
With guilty blood, but worn with toil, and spent
With many a painful step to other shrines,
And in the paths of men. By land, by sea
Wearied alike, obedient to the voice,
The oracles of Phœbus, I approach
Thy shrine, thy statue, goddess ; here to fix
My stand, till judgment shall decide my cause.

[Here the FURIES enter.]

CHOR. These toils oppress me, as with breathless haste
I urge the keen pursuit : o'er the long tract
Of continent, and o'er th' extended ocean,
Swift as the flying ship I hold my course,
'Though on no pennons borne.—There, there he stands,
His speed outstripping mine. Have I then found thee?
With joy I sniff the scent of human blood.
Take heed, take heed ; keep careful watch ; nor let
This murderer of his mother once more 'scape,
By secret flight, your vengeance : trembling, weak,
He hangs upon the image of the goddess,
And wishes to be cleared of his base deeds.
It may not be ; no : when the fluent moisture
Is sunk into the ground, 'tis lost for ever :
Can then a mother's blood, spilt on the earth,
Be from the earth recovered ? No. Thy hour
Of suffering is arrived, the hour that gives
The purple stream, that warms thy heart, to quench
My thirst, which burns to quaff thy blood, and bend
To the dark realms below thy wasted limbs ;

There, for thy mother's murder, shalt thou learn
To taste of pain ; there see whatever mortal
Dared an injurious deed, profaned the gods,
Attacked with ruffian violence the stranger,
Or raised his impious hand against a parent,
Each with vindictive pains condemned to groan,
His crimes requiting ; for beneath the earth
The awful judge of mortals, Pluto sits,
And with relentless justice marks their deeds.

ORES. Trained in affliction's rigid lore, I know
Many ablutions : when to speak I know
When to be silent : inspiration now,
With heavenly wisdom prompts my tongue to plead.
The faded blood is vanished from my hands,
Nor from my mother's slaughter leaves a stain ;
The recent crimson at Apollo's shrine
Washed off with lavers pure, with offered victims
Atoned. This honest prelude might be graced
With many an argument : nor came I hither
Consorted with a vile and impious band.
All things with time grow old, and wear away.
And now from hallowed lips my pious prayer
Invokes the power presiding o'er this realm,
Royal Minerva, that she haste to aid
Her suppliant : so with voluntary zeal
Myself, my country, all the Argive people,
To her with justice I devote for ever.
If in the coasts of Libya, on the banks
Of Triton, native stream, she sets her foot
Or bare, or buskined, prompt to aid her friends ;
If o'er the plains of Phlegra, like a chief
That marshals his bold troops, she darts her eye,
Her presence I implore ; though distant far,
The goddess hears ; to free me from these ills.

CHOR. No : not Apollo, nor Minerva's power
 Shall set thee free, but that an abject outcast
 Thou drag thy steps, seeking in vain to find
 Rest to thy joyless soul, exhausted, worn,
 A lifeless shadow. Yet thy pride replies not,
 Me, and my threats despising, though to me
 Devoted, my rich victim, and alive
 'To feed my rage, not offered on the altar.
 Hear now the potent strain, that charms thee mine.

Prosode.

Quickly, sisters, stand around,
 Raise your choral warblings high ;
 Since, the guilty soul to wound,
 Swells the horrid harmony.
 Since to mortal man we show
 How we give his fate to flow ;
 Since our will his doom ordains,
 Show that justice 'mongst us reigns.
 He, whose hands from guilt are pure,
 Stands in innocence secure ;
 And from youth to honoured age
 Fears not our vindictive rage.
 To the wretch, that strives to hide
 Ruffian hands with murder dyed,
 Clothed in terrors we appear,
 Unrelentingly severe ;
 And, faithful to the injured dead,
 Pour our vengeance on his head.

Strophe 1.

Hear me, dread parent, sable-vested Night,
 O hear th' avenger of each impious deed ;

Whether we lie in shades concealed
 Or to the eye of day revealed !
 Seest thou how Phœbus robs me of my right
 From my just rage the trembling victim freed,
 Destined his mother's death t' atone,
 And for her blood to shed his own !
 O'er my victim raise the strain,
 And let the dismal sound
 His tortured bosom wound,
 And to frenzy fire his brain.
 Silent be the silver shell,
 Whilst we chant the potent spell ;
 Then yelling bid th' infernal descant roll,
 To harrow up his soul.

Antistrophe 1.

Avenging Fate, as bending o'er the loom
 She wove the web, to us this part assigned,
 "Whoe'er the laws shall dare disdain,
 And his rude hand with murder stain,
 Pursue him, Furies, urge his rigorous doom,
 Till refuge in the realms below he find."
 Ev'n there not free ; my chastening power
 Pursues him to that dreary shore.
 O'er my victim raise the strain,
 And let the dismal sound
 His tortured bosom wound,
 And to frenzy fire his brain.
 Silent be the silver shell,
 Whilst we chant the potent spell ;
 Then yelling bid th' infernal descant roll,
 To harrow up his soul.

Strophe 2.

This task assigned us at our natal hour,
 Far from th' immortal gods our steps we bend :

Nor welcome at the social feast,
Nor honoured with a splendent vest ;
For mine I proudly claim the dreadful power
From its firm base the ruined house to rend,
When in calm peace its ruthless lord
Distains with a friend's blood his sword.
Him, though strong, we rush to seize ;
And for the new-poured blood
Demand his purple flood,
Glorying in the sacrifice ;
Duteous hastening to remove
Cares like these from angry Jove ;
And spare, whilst fierce for blood my vengeance flies,
The terrors of the skies.

Antistrophe 2.

His wrathful eye Heaven's mighty monarch rolls,
Awfully silent, on this blood-stained race.
But all the gorgeous blaze of power,
Which trembling mortals here adore,
When, mantled in these sable-shaded stoles,
With blood-besprinkled feet we urge the chase,
Since darkling to th' infernal shades,
And all its boasted glory fades.
Near him, as he flies, I bound,
And when, with guilt oppress,
His weary steps would rest,
Spurn him headlong to the ground.
Senseless, he, perchance, and blind,
Such the frenzy of his mind,
Such the deep gloom guilt spreads around his
walls,
He knows not that he falls.

Epode.

But shall sheltering wall or gloom
 That from darkening guilt is spread,
 Hide him from his rigorous doom,
 Or protect his destined head?
 Mine the vengeance to design,
 And to stamp it deep is mine.
 Sternly mindful of the crime,
 Nor by man appeased, nor time,
 When the wretch, whose deed unblest
 Dares profane high Heaven's behest,
 Though concealed from mortal eyes
 Through the sunless darkness flies,
 We pursue the rugged chase,
 And his dubious footsteps trace.
 Hear then, guilty mortals, hear,
 And the righteous god revere;
 Hear the task to me assigned,
 Fate the firm decree shall bind;
 Mine the prize of old ordained,
 Never with dishonour stained,
 Though my drear abode profound
 Night and darkness cover round.

MINERVA, ORESTES, CHORUS,

MINERVA. It was a voice that called; distant far
 I heard it, where Scamander laves the fields
 My ancient right: to me the Grecian chiefs
 With voluntary zeal assigned this portion
 Of their rich conquest, ever to be mine,
 Selected as a gift to the brave race
 Of Theseus. With a speed that equals wings
 My vig'rous steeds thence whirled my car, the wind
 Against my Ægis rustling as I passed.

But who are these consorted here? Mine eye
Views them unterrified ; but much I marvel.
What, and whence are you? To you all I speak,
To him, the stranger, seated at my image,
And you, whose hideous shape resembles nought
Of mortal race, nor goddesses in Heaven
Seen by the gods, nor like the human form.
But the deformed to taunt with obloquy
Is unbecoming ; justice starts at it.

CHOR. Daughter of Jove, take our report in brief.
We are the gloomy progeny of night,
Called Furies in the drear abodes below.

MIN. I know your race, and aptly added titles.

CHOR. Soon shalt thou learn my honours, and my office.

MIN. Speak clearly then, without perplexing preface.

CHOR. 'Tis ours to drive the murderers from the house.

MIN. This all the vengeance to their guilt assigned?

CHOR. Where they shall never taste or peace or joy.

MIN. And does thy yelling voice thus drive HIM out?

CHOR. He dared to be the murderer of his mother.

MIN. Urged by the force of no necessity?

CHOR. What force could urge the wretch to kill his
mother?

MIN. He hears but half, that hears one party only.

CHOR. He would refuse an oath, nor dares propose it.

MIN. Thy aim seems rather to obtain the fame
Of justice, than to execute her laws.

CHOR. How so? Inform me ; thou art rich in wisdom.

MIN. Deeds of injustice are not cleared by oaths.

CHOR. Hear thou the cause, and judge with righteous
justice.

MIN. Rests the decision of the cause on me?

CHOR. We reverence thee as worthiest 'midst the worthy.

MIN. Say, stranger, what canst thou reply to this?

Speak first thy race, thy country, thy misfortunes ;
Then urge thy plea against this accusation,
If trusting in the justice of thy cause,
Thus seated near my altar, thou embrace
With reverend hands, a suppliant as Ixion,
My statue. Be thy answer short and clear.

ORES. Royal Minerva, let me first remove
What thy last words, with much concern, suggest.
I am not stained with blood, nor shall my hand
Pollute thy statue : what I urge in proof
Bears strong conviction. Him, whose hands are red
With blood, the laws forbid to plead his cause,
Till with its flowing gore the new-slain victim
Has made atonement, and the cleansing wave
Restored his purity. In other shrines
Long since these hallowed rites have been performed
With offered victims and the fluent stream.
Blameless of this offence, I next declare
My race : an Argive : nor to thee unknown
My sire, the leader of the naval hosts,
The royal Agamemnon ; for with him
Thy conquering hand laid the proud walls of Troy
In dust : returning to his house he perished
By deeds of baseness ; for my dark-souled mother
With various trains in private murdered him ;
Th' ensanguined bath attested the foul deed.
I, then an exile, bending back my steps,
Slew her that gave me birth ; nor shall my tongue
Deny the deed ; it was a vengeance due
To my loved father's shade : so Phœbus deemed,
Who urged me, and denounced heart-rending woes,
Should I shrink back refusing to avenge
The guilt : but if with justice, be thou judge.
To thy deciding voice my soul submits.

MIN. This is a cause of moment, and exceeds
 The reach of mortal man : nor is it mine
 To judge, when blood with eager rage excites
 To vengeance. Thou with preparation meet
 Hast to my shrine approached a suppliant pure,
 Without offence ; and to my favoured city
 Uncharged with blame I readily receive thee.
 Let these, whose ruthless rage knows not the touch
 Of pity, not succeeding in their plea,
 Retire awhile, till judgment shall decide :
 The contest : from their breasts black poison flows,
 And taints the sickening earth. Thus I pronounce
 To each, unequal in this dubious strife
 To give content to both. But since to me
 Th' appeal is made, it shall be mine t' elect
 Judges of blood, their faith confirmed by oath,
 And ratify the everlasting law.
 Prepare you for the trial, call your proofs,
 Arrange your evidence, bring all that tends
 To aid your cause : I from the holiest men
 That grace my city will select to judge
 This cause with justice ; men, whose sanctity
 Abhors injustice, and reveres an oath.

CHORUS.

Strophe I.

Confusion on these upstart laws !
 Havoc with haughty stride
 Shall march, and wave her banner wide,
 If venial be this bloody caitiff's cause.
 Impunity shall mortals lead
 To every savage deed,
 And prompt the son with rage unblest
 To plant the dagger in the parents' breast.

I smile at all this lawless force ;
 Nor shall our dreaded power
 In vengeance visit impious mortals more :
 No : let destruction take her destined course.

Antistrophe 1.

Whilst his own anguish one shall moan,
 He hears his neighbour tell,
 Appalled, of deeds as fierce, as fell ;
 Tear falls to tear, and groan succeeds to groan.
 Nor shall the rolling storm of woe
 One gleam of comfort know.
 When anguish rends the tortured breast,
 Be not to us the mournful call address.
 " Where is your throne, ye Furies, where
 Justice," the father cries,
 Or the pale mother, as in blood she lies :
 But justice from her throne is exiled far.

Strophe 2.

Yet are there hours, when conscious fear
 And the stern eye, that darts
 Severely through their secret hearts,
 With sober counsels check their mad career.
 For when no ray of heavenly light
 Breaks through the sullen night,
 Dark deeds ensue, and virtue's power
 By man, by State is revered no more.
 Shall he, the wretch that scorns control,
 And spurns each sacred law,
 Or he that drags his chain with seryile awe,
 Feel the sweet peace that calms the virtuous soul ?

Antistrophe 2.

Placed in the midst does strength reside,
 With an indignant frown
 On each extreme the gods look down ;
 Injustice is the child of impious pride.
 But all the joys, that life can know,
 From tempered wisdom flow.
 To justice chief thy soul incline,
 And bow with reverence at her hallowed shrine.
 Nor dare, allured by cursed gold,
 With foot profane and bold
 To spurn her altars : vengeance waits the crime,
 And armed with terrors knows her destined time.

Epode.

Let each with awe profound
 A parent's honoured name obey :
 Each to thy milder voice, humanity,
 Attentive homage pay,
 When for the stranger thou art found
 Pleading thy strains of pious potency.
 He that to virtue's heavenly power
 Unforced his willing soul shall bow,
 Nor ruin's tyrant rage shall know,
 Nor keen affliction's torturing hour.
 But he, that dares her sacred laws despise,
 Trampling on justice to amass his prey,
 Appalled shall hear the rushing whirlwinds rise,
 And tremble at the storms that swell the sea.
 Wild with despair
 He pours his prayer,
 Whirled in the giddy tempest round ;
 His blasted pride
 The gods deride,
 And all his daring hopes confound ;

Smile; as they view him racked with pain
 Bound in misfortune's iron chain;
 As on the pointed rock they see him thrown,
 To perish there unpitied and alone.

MINERVA, APOLLO, ORESTES, CHORUS.

The JUDGES seated.

MINERVA. Now, herald, let thy voice to all my people
 Proclaim attention: sound the Tuscan trumpet,
 That its ear-piercing notes may fill the city,
 Commanding silence, and impressing awe
 Due to this great assembly; that the State
 May learn my everlasting laws, and hear
 The righteous judgment that decides this cause.

CHOR. Royal Apollo, where thy rule extends,
 There lord it: but what right canst thou claim here?

APOL. To give my evidence I come. This man
 Is at my shrine a suppliant, at my shrine
 He sojourns; with ablutions pure I cleansed
 His stains of blood; and now shall plead his cause,
 Our common cause, since for his mother's death
 Your accusations reach e'en me; but thou
 Urge, as thou canst, thy plea: open the charge.

MIN. This is incumbent on you; open then
 The charge: th' accuser's voice must first explain
 Clearly through every circumstance the cause.

CHOR. Though we are many, brief shall be our words.
 Now answer me in order, word for word.

My first demand is, Didst thou kill thy mother?

ORES. I did; and never shall deny the deed.

CHOR. First of the three this is one signal foil.

ORES. Unmoved I stand, and thy proud vaunts are vain.

CHOR. Declare it then at once, How didst thou kill her?

ORES. I drew my sword, and plunged it in her breast.

CHOR. At whose persuasion? or by whose advice?

ORES. By HIS oracular voice : he will attest it.

CHOR. The Prophet urge thee to this bloody deed !

ORES. Nor thus far have I to accuse my fate.

CHOR. Far other language the condemning vote
Will teach thy tongue.

ORES. My confidence is firm ;
My father from the tomb will send me aid.

CHOR. Confiding in the dead he slew his mother.

ORES. Her breast was spotted with a double stain.

CHOR. What may this mean ? Speak, and inform thy
judges.

ORES. She slew my father when she slew her husband.

CHOR. And yet thou livest : from that stain she's free.

ORES. Why, whilst she lived, didst thou not drive her
out ?

CHOR. She had no kindred blood with him she slew.

ORES. Is mine allied then to my mother's blood ?

CHOR. How else, before thy birth, did she sustain,
How nourish thee ? The murd'rous wretch disowns
That dearest of all ties, a mother's blood.

ORES. Now let me call thy testimony ; now
Declare, Apollo, if I slew her justly :
For that I slew her, in such circumstance,
I not deny : if rightfully or not,
Decide, that I to these may plead thy sanction.

APOL. To you, the great and reverend council here
Placed by Minerva, will I speak and truly ;
For never shall the god of prophecy
Pronounce a falsehood ; never have I uttered
From my oracular seat to man, to woman,
Or State, save what the great Olympian sire
Shall have commanded. Of his sovereign justice
Learn you the force, and bow to his high will :
Nor deem an oath of greater power than Jove.

CHOR. This oracle, thou say'st, was dictated

By Jove, to charge Orestes, whilst his hand
Was armed with vengeance for his father's murder,
To pay no reverence to his mother's blood.

APOL. Of higher import is it, when a man
Illustrious for his virtues, by the gods
Exalted to the regal throne, shall die,
Die by a woman's hand, by one that dares not
Bend, like an Amazon, the stubborn bow.
But hear me, Pallas, hear me, you that sit
In awful judgment to decide this cause.
Victorious from the war, with glory crowned,
And graced with many a trophy, at the bath
She smilingly received him ; there refreshed,
As o'er his head he threw the splendid robe
Prepared t' entangle him, she slew her husband.
So died the chief, the glorious, the renowned,
The leader of the warlike troops of Greece :
And such I speak this woman, reverend judges,
To strike your souls with horror at her deeds.

CHOR. So Jove, it seems, respects the father's fate ;
Yet on his father he could bind the chain,
The hoary Saturn : that his deed gainsays
Thy words : I pray you mark the poor evasion.

APOL. Detested hags, th' abhorrence of the gods !
He could unbind these chains, and the release
Has a medicinal power. But when the blood,
That issues from the slain, sinks in the dust
It never rises more. For this my sire
No remedy admits, in all besides
With sovereign power or ruins or restores.

CHOR. See with what ill-judged zeal thy arguments
Labour t' absolve him ! Shall the wretch, whose hand
Spilt on the earth the kindred blood that flowed
Within his mother's veins, return to Argos
Lord of his father's house ? Before what altar,

Sacred to public off'rings, shall he bend ?
 What friendly laver shall admit his hands ?

APOL. This too shall I explain ; and mark me well,
 If reason guides my words. The mother's power
 Produces not the offspring, ill called hers.

No : 'tis the father, that to her commits
 The infant plant ; she but the nutrient soil
 That gives the stranger growth, if fav'ring Heaven
 Denies it not to flourish : this I urge

In proof, a father may assert that name
 Without a mother's aid ; an instance sits
 Minerva, daughter of Olympian Jove ;
 Not the slow produce of nine darkling months,
 But formed at once in all her perfect bloom :
 Such from no pregnant goddess ever sprung.

Thy State, thy people, Pallas, be it mine
 I' exalt to glory, and what else of greatness
 I know to give. This suppliant to thy shrine
 I sent, assuring his eternal faith ;

Thy votary he, and his descendants thine,
 From sire to son through all succeeding ages.

MIN. The pleas are urged : these now I charge to give
 Sentence, with strict regard to truth and justice.

CHOR. We have discharged our shafts : and now I wait
 To hear what sentence shall adjudge this cause.

MIN. What, am I never to escape your censure ?

CHOR. Give what you've heard due weight ; and with
 pure hearts

Pronouncing sentence reverence your high oath.

MIN. Ye citizens of Athens, now attend,
 Whilst this great council in a cause of blood
 First give their judgment. But through future ages
 This awful court shall to the hosts of Ægeus
 With uncorrupted sanctity remain.

Here on this Mount of Mars the Amazons

Of old encamped, when their embattled troops
Marched against Theseus, and in glittering arms
Breathed vengeance ; here their new-aspiring towers
Raised high their rampired heads to storm his towers,
And here their hallowed altars rose to Mars :
Hence its illustrious name the cliff retains,
The Mount of Mars. In this the solemn state
Of this majestic city, and the awe
That rises thence shall be a holy guard
Against injustice, shall protect the laws
Pure and unsullied from th' oppressive power
Of innovation, and th' adulterate stain
Of foreign mixture : should thy hand pollute
The liquid fount with mud, where wilt thou find
The grateful draught ? Let not my citizens
Riot in lawless anarchy, nor wear
The chain of tyrant power, nor from their state
Loose all the curb of rigour : this removed,
What mortal man, unchecked with sense of fear,
Would reverence justice ? Let the majesty,
That here resides, impress your souls with awe :
Your country has a fence, your town a guard,
Such as no nation knows ; not those that dwell
In Scythia, or the cultured realms of Pelops,
This court superior to th' alluring glare
Of pestilent gold, this court that claims your awe
Severely just, I constitute your guard,
Watchful to shield your country and its peace :
These my commands to every future age
Have I extended. Now behoves you, judges,
Give test of your integrity ; bring forth
The shells ; with strictest justice give your suffrage,
And reverence your high oath. This is my charge.

CHOR. Nor of their honours rob this train, whose power
Is dreadful in the drear abodes below.

APOL. And be my oracles, the voice of Jove,
Revered, nor seek to move their firm decree.

CHOR. Beyond thy charge protecting deeds of blood,
Nor reverend are thy oracles, nor pure.

APOL. Think of the expiation, which of old
Ixion made for blood : wilt thou arraign
My father's councils there ? Or slept his wisdom ?

CHOR. Thou say'st it ; but if justice fails me here,
This land shall feel the terrors of my vengeance.

APOL. Unhonoured thou by every power of Heaven,
Or young, or 'old, to triumph here is mine.

CHOR. Such in the house of Pheres were thy deeds,
When, won by thy alluring voice, the Fates
On mortal man conferred immortal honours.

APOL. To aid, to grace the pious, when their prayers
Rightly invoke our influence, is just.

CHOR. What, hast thou crushed the power of ancient
And wouldst thou now delude our honoured age ? [Fate,

APOL. Soon shall thy malice, baffled in this cause,
Shed its black venom harmless to thy foes.

CHOR. Since thy proud youth insults my hoary years,
I wait th' event in silence, and suspend
The fury of my vengeance on this city.

MIN. Last to give suffrage in this cause is mine :
In favour of Orestes shall I add

My vote : for as no mother gave me birth,
My grace in all things, save the nuptial rites,
Attends the male, as from my sire I drew
The vigour of my soul. No woman's fate
Stained with her husband's blood, whom nature formed
Lord of his house, finds partial preference here.
Orestes, if the number of the votes
Be equal, is absolved. Now from the urn
I let those among the judges, to whose honour
This office is assigned, draw forth the lots.

ORES. O Phœbus, what th' event that waits this cause !

CHOR. O Night, dark mother, through thy sable gloom
Seest thou these things? Now on the doubtful edge
Of black despair I stand, or joyful light,
Driven out with infamy, or graced with honours.

APOL. Now, strangers, count the lots with righteous
heed,

And with impartial justice sever them.
One shell misplaced haply brings ruin, one
May raise again a desolated house.

MIN. He is absolved, free from the doom of blood,
For equal are the numbers of the shells.

ORES. O thou, whose tutelary power preserved
The honours of my house, thou, goddess, thou
Hast to his country and his native rites
Restored this exile ; and each Greek shall say,
This Argive to his father's throne returns,
So Pallas wills, and Phœbus, and the god
All-powerful to protect ; my father's death
He marked severe, and looks indignant down
On those that patronize my mother's cause.
First to this country, and to this thy people
Through time's eternal course I pledge my faith,
And bind it with an oath : now to my house
I bend my steps : never may chieftain thence
Advance against this land with ported spear.
If any shall hereafter violate
My oath now made, though then these mouldering bones
Rest in the silent tomb, my shade shall raise
Invincible distress, disasters, toils,
To thwart them, and obstruct their lawless march,
Till in dismay repentant they abhor
Their enterprise. But to the social powers,
That reverence this thy State, and lift the lance
In its defence, benevolent shall be

My gentler influence. Hail, goddess ; hail,
Ye guardians of the city ; be your walls
Impregnable, and in the shock of war
May conquest grace the spear that aids your cause !

CHOR. I burst with rage. With cruel pride
These youthful gods my slighted age deride.
And, the old laws disdaining to obey,
Rend from my hands my prey.
Tortured with grief's corroding smart,
And taught disgrace and scorn to know,
Distilling from my anguished heart
The pestilential drop shall flow ;
Where'er it falls, nor fruit around,
Nor leaf shall grace the blasted ground ;
Through the sick air its baleful dews
A caustic venom shall diffuse ;
And breathing on this hateful race
With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.
Vainly shall I heave my sighs,
Or bid my angry vengeance rise ?
To insults, which my bosom rend,
Vulgar spirits scorn to bend,
And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain
Of their disgrace complain ?

MIN. Let my entreaties move you ; bear not this
With such deep anger ; for no conquest here
Wounds your insulted honour : from the urn
The lots came equal, so disposed by truth,
To thee no insult off'ring, and from Jove
Flowed splendid signs ; he gave the oracle,
He added his high test, that for the deed
Orestes should not suffer. Breathe not then
Your heavy vengeance on this land ; restrain
Your indignation ; o'er these sickening fields
Drop not your pestilential dews, nor blast

Their glittering verdure, and their springing seeds.
And here I pledge my faith, this grateful land
Shall willingly receive you, raise your seats
High at their blazing hearths, and, with deep awe
Imprest, pay reverend honours to your power.

CHOR. I burst with rage. With cruel pride
These youthful gods my slighted age deride;
And, the old laws disdaining to obey,
Rend from my hands my prey.
Tortured with grief's corroding smart,
And taught disgrace and scorn to know,
Distilling from my anguished heart
The pestilential drop shall flow;
Where'er it falls, nor fruit around,
Nor leaf shall grace the blasted ground;
Through the sick air its baleful dews
A caustic venom shall diffuse;
And breathing on this hated race
With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.
Vainly shall I heave my sighs,
Or bid my angry vengeance rise?
To insults, which my bosom rend,
Vulgar spirits scorn to bend;
And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain
Of their disgrace complain?

MIN. No, you are not disgracèd; not let your wrath,
Immortal as you are, to mortal man
Spread desolation o'er the earth. I too
Prevail with Jove. And wherefore should I say
Of all the gods I only know the keys
That ope those solid doors, within whose vaults
His thunders sleep? Of these there is no need.
By me persuaded let thy hasty tongue
Forbear those threats, from which no fruit can flow,
But ruin to the earth; compose that rage,

Whose swelling tide o'erflows all bounds, with me
In the same mansion, and with equal honours
Revered, enjoying through these ample realms
The prime oblations, victims doomed to bleed
For blessings on the birth, or nuptial hour,
That thou shall thank me for this friendly counsel.

CHOR. Shall I brook this? Shall I then deign
In this cursed land to spend my slighted age,
And my lost honours mourn in vain?
No: be each vengeful thought inflamed with rage:
Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart!
Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.
Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear!
These gods, with a malignant smile,
Ah me! my baffled power beguile,
And from my brows the public honours tear.

MIN. Thine anger will I bear with, for thy years
Are more than mine, thy wisdom more; though Jove
Hath with no niggard grace on me bestowed
A prudent sense. You yet are strangers here;
But I foresee, when once your seats are fixed,
These scenes will be delightful, and the flow
Of future years to the inhabitants
Roll more abundant honours. Where Erechtheus
Raised high his regal structures, thou shalt hold
Thy residence, receiving from the men,
And from the train of females, such high honours
As mortals never paid thee. Cast not then
On these my realms the pestilent bane, that fires
Beyond the rage of wine the frantic youth
To wild ensanguined slaughter: in their hearts
Pour not the fury of the crested cock
Exciting discord, broils, and civil war.
To foreign wars, when dangers threaten nigh,
Let glory lead their arms: domestic strife

Is hateful to my soul : bethink thee well,
Thou hast thy choice, by courtesy to win
Returns of courtesy, and revered high
To share this country grateful to the gods.

CHOR. Shall I brook this? Shall I then deign
In this cursed land to spend my slighted age,
And my lost honours mourn in vain?
No: be each vengeful thought inflamed with rage.
Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart!
Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.
Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear!
These gods, with a malignant smile,
Ah me! my baffled power beguile,
And from my brows the public honours tear.

MIN. I will not yet surcease to speak thee fair;
And never with just cause shalt thou complain
That with inhospitable pride my youth,
And the rude race of mortals dwelling here,
Drove thee, an ancient goddess, with disgrace
An outcast from this land. If yet the power
Of mild persuasion, dropping from my lips
In words of sweet and soothing courtesy,
Hath not lost all its virtue, thou wilt stay:
If thou disdain to stay, yet not with justice
Canst thou with wrath or vengeance load this town,
Nor on its people shed thy baneful dews.
'Tis in thy choice to bless this land, and fix
With everlasting honours here thy seat.

CHOR. What seat, say, royal virgin, shall be mine?

MIN. Where misery never comes. Assent, accept it.

CHOR. I do assent. What honour now awaits me?

MIN. That, without thee, no house shall rise to glory.

CHOR. Wilt thou do this, advance my honour thus?

MIN. Him that reveres thee, shall my power protect.

CHOR. And shall thy word stand unimpaired by time?

MIN. It is not mine to violate my faith.

CHOR. Thy words have almost soothed me to a calm,
And the high storm of anger dies away.

MIN. The charms of friendship here shalt thou enjoy.

CHOR. Say, with what strains shall I salute this land?

MIN. Such as, allied to conquest, from the earth,
From the rich dews of ocean, from the sky
Soft-tempered with the genial sun, may wake
Ambrosial gales diffusing o'er this earth
Luxuriance to its fruits, and to its flocks
Prolific vigour, to its peopled towns
Th' unfading glow of health. Be this thy charge ;
Mine, in the glorious toils of war to grace
Their fame-ennobled arms with victory.

CHOR. Goddess, here thy seat I share,
Hostile to this town no more ;
Which the dreadful god of war,
And the Thund'rer's sovereign power,
Give the pride of Greece to rise
Guardian of the rites divine,
Glory of the fav'ring skies,
Give to watch o'er freedom's shrine.

I too breathe the potent prayer :
May the sun's ambrosial ray,
Rolling o'er the fruitful year,
All its richest charms display !

MIN. For my loved city with a willing mind
This do I, seating here these awful powers
That yield with much reluctance ; for o'er man
The Fates assign them a despotic sway.
And he, that feels their terrors, often knows not
Whence springs the vengeful wrath, whose iron scourge
Imbitters life : for the sire's long-passed crimes
Draw to their chast'ning hand the suffering sou ;

And 'midst his thoughts of greatness, silent ruin
With ruthless hate pursues, and crushes him.

CHOR. O'er their saplings spreading fair
May no chill wind noxious blow ;
Nor the dry and scorching air
Singe their fresh buds' opening glow.

For my sake may no disease
Sicken o'er the blasted year :
May their teeming flocks increase,
And a double offspring bear.

'Gainst the solemn festal day
Numerous may their herds arise ;
Sportive o'er the rich fields play,
Gift of the propitious skies.

MIN. Hear this, ye guardians of the State, and know
Her word shall be accomplished ; for the gods
That tread the spangled skies, and those that hold
In the dark realms beneath their solemn thrones,
Revere her awful power ; and her high strains
To mortal man in accents dread pronounce
Blessings to some, to some a life of woes.

CHOR. May no harsh untimely doom
Sweep the manly youth away ;
May the virgins' ripening bloom
Crown with love the bridal day.

You, that to the Fates allied
Claim this just and ample power ;
You, that o'er each house preside,
Sovereign rulers of each hour ;

Goddesses, with holy dread
Whose high state mankind revere,
Here your softest influence shed,
Here extend your guardian care.

MIN. This ready zeal accorded to my country
Delights me ; and with ardour must I love
Gentle persuasion, that hath tuned my voice
To move them from their stern and fierce resolves
The pleading voice of Jove hath here prevailed ;
And my warm efforts in the cause of mercy
Extend their triumph through all future time.

CHOR. Ne'er may discord's hideous power
Here unsated stalk its round :
Slaughter ne'er with kindred gore
Madly drench the thirsty ground ;
Whilst revenge in barb'rous pride
Shakes the streets with thund'ring tread,
Blood for blood demands, and wide
Joys the mutual rage to spread.

But to union's soft command
May their minds harmonious move ;
Leagued in war, a friendly band ;
Tuned in peace to social love.

MIN. So the mild accents of the soothing tongue,
Attuned by wisdom, win their easy way :
And to this people from these horrid forms
I see much good. With gentle courtesy
Their courtesy requiting, always owned
By acts of highest reverence, you, whose care
Is watchful o'er this country and this seat
Of justice, all shall reap the meed of glory.

CHOR. Hail, with wealth, with glory graced
Citizens of Athens, hail !
Next to Jove in glory placed,
Never may your honours fail !
Trained to wisdom's sober lore,
Favoured with Minerva's love,

Guarded by her virgin power,

Dear through her to sovereign Jove.

MIN. And you all hail ! But be it mine to show
The place assigned you for your residence.
Go to those sacred flames, they will conduct you,
And from these hallowed victims sink with speed
To the dark shades below ; imprison there
Whate'er is noxious to these realms ; whate'er
Has influence to bless them, send in triumph.
And you, high-lineaged guardians of the State,
Attend these stranger-guests to their new seats,
And be each gentle thought attuned to good.

CHOR. Once more hail, and hail again,

All that here have fixed your seat ;

Mortal and immortal train,

Guardians of Minerva's state !

Here your residence I share,

To my power due homage pay,

Ne'er shall woe or sullen care

Cloud with grief life's golden day.

MIN. I like these votive measures ; and will send
The bright flames of these splendour-shedding torches,
With those that guard my hallowed image here,
Attendant on you to the dark abodes
Beneath the earth. And let th' Athenian train,
The grace, the glory of the wide-stretched world,
Their manly youth, their virgins' roseate bloom,
And their age-honoured matrons now advance,
Arrayed in richest vesture darting round
Its verneil-tinctured radiance ; let the torches
Blaze, that this sable troop through future times
May shine conspicuous for their friendly aid.

THE ATTENDANT TRAIN.

Remove then from this hallowed fane,
Daughters of Night, remove your virgin train :
With festal pomp, and solemn tread,
Reverend your awe-commanding state we lead.
Breathing blessings o'er this land
Seek your ancient caves below,
Leading Fortune in your hand,
Breathing blessings as you go.
For you the altars rise, the victims bleed,
And sacred honours are decreed ;
For you the rich libations dew the ground,
Whilst torches spread their blaze around.
Go, in your glory then rejoicing go,
Go, and lead the Fates along,
Joining in this votive song ;
Whilst on this city from his throne on high
Jove propitious bends his eye.
Go then ; and as you move your friendly train,
Responsive to this warbled strain
Harmonious bid your swelling voices flow.

THE PERSIANS.

No representation can be conceived more agreeable to a brave and free people, than that which sets before their eyes the ruin of an invading tyrant defeated by their own valour ; and no poet could ever claim the right of making such representation with so good a grace as Æschylus, who had borne a distinguished part in the real scene. Animated by his noble subject, and the enthusiasm with which he loved his country, he has here displayed all the warineth and dignity of his genius, but tempered at the same time with so chastised a judgment, that we are surprised to see the infant drama come forth at once with all those graces which constitute its perfection : it is like his own Minerva, that sprung from the head of Jupiter,

Then shining heavenly fair, a goddess armed.

Beside this wonderful management of the parts, the poet has the delicacy to set the glory of his countrymen in the brightest view, by putting their praises into the mouths of their enemies. Not satisfied with a spirited narration of their defeat, and a recital of the many royal chiefs that perished in that battle ; not satisfied with spreading the terror through all the realms of Persia, and placing them in a manner before our eyes in all the distress of desolation and despair, he hath interested even the dead, and, with the awful solemnity of a

religious incantation, evoked the ghost of Darius to testify to his Persians that no safety, no hope remained to them, if they continued their hostile attempts against Greece ; so that this sublime conception hath engaged earth and sea, heaven and hell, to bear honourable testimony to the glory of his countrymen, and the superiority of their arms.

This tragedy was exhibited eight years after the defeat at Salamis, whilst the memory of each circumstance was yet recent ; so that we may consider the narration as a faithful history of this great event. The war was not yet ended, though the Persian monarch had offered to make the most humiliating concessions, and the Athenians were inclined to accept them ; but Themistocles opposed the peace. So that we are further to consider this play in a political light ; the poet, by so animated a description of the pernicious effects of an obstinate pride, and by filling the spectators with a malignant compassion for the vanquished Xerxes, indirectly indisposing his countrymen to a continuation of the war. Thus everything at Athens, even their shows, had a respect to the public good. This is the fine remark of P. Brumoy.

The scene of this tragedy is at Susa, before the ancient structure appropriated to the great council of state, and near the tomb of Darius.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ATOSSA.

MESSSENGER.

GHOST OF DARIUS.

XERXES.

CHORUS, THE COUNCIL OF
STATE.

CHORUS.

WHILST o'er the fields of Greece the embattled troops
Of Persia march, with delegated sway
We o'er their rich and gold-abounding seats

Hold faithful our firm guard ; to this high charge
Xerxes, our royal lord, th' imperial son
Of great Darius, chose our honoured age.
But for the king's return, and his armed host
Blazing with gold, my soul presaging ill
Swells in my tortured breast : for all her force
Hath Asia sent, and for her youth I sigh.
Nor messenger arrives, nor horseman spurs
With tidings to this seat of Persia's kings.
The gates of Susa and Ecbatana
Poured forth their martial trains ; and Cissia sees
Her ancient towers forsaken, whilst her youth,
Some on the bounding steed, the tall barque some
Ascending, some with painful march on foot,
Haste on, t' arrange the deepening files of war.
Amistres, Artaphernes, and the might
Of great Astaspes, Megabazes bold,
Chieftains of Persia, kings, that to the power
Of the great king obedient, march with these
Leading their martial thousands ; their proud steeds
Prance under them ; steel bows and shafts their arms,
Dreadful to see, and terrible in fight,
Deliberate valour breathing in their souls.
Artembares, that in his fiery horse
Delights ; Masistres ; and Imæus bold,
Bending with manly strength his stubborn bow ;
Pharandaces, and Sosthanes, that drives
With military pomp his rapid steeds.
Others the vast prolific Nile hath sent ;
Pegastagon, that from Ægyptus draws
His high birth ; Susiscanes ; and the chief
That reigns o'er sacred Memphis, great Arsames ;
And Ariomardus, that o'er ancient Thebes
Bears the supreme dominion ; and with these

Drawn from their wat'ry marshes numbers trained
To the stout oar. Next these the Lycian troops,
Soft sons of luxury ; and those that dwell
Amidst the inland forests, from the sea
Far distant ; these Metragathes commands,
And virtuous Arceus, royal chiefs, that shine
In burnished gold, and many a whirling car
Drawn by six generous steeds from Sardis lead,
A glorious, and a dreadful spectacle.
And from the foot of Tmolus, sacred mount,
Eager to bind on Greece the servile yoke,
Mardon and Tharybis the massy spear
Grasp with unwearied vigour ; the light lance
The Mysians shake. A mingled multitude
Swept from her wide dominions, skilled to draw
Th' unerring bow, in ships Euphrates sends
From golden Babylon. With falchions armed
From all th' extent of Asia move the hosts
Obedient to their monarch's stern command.
Thus marched the flower of Persia, whose loved youth
The world of Asia nourished, and with sighs
Laments their absence ; many an anxious look
Their wives, their parents send, count the slow days,
And tremble at the long-protracted time.

Strophe 1.

Already o'er the adverse strand
In arms the monarch's martial squadrons spread ;
The threat'ning ruin shakes the land,
And each tall city bows its towered head.
Barque bound to barque, their wondrous way
They bridge across th' indignant sea ;
The narrow Hellespont's vexed waves disdain,
His proud neck taught to wear the chain.

Now has the peopled Asia's warlike lord,
 By land, by sea, with foot, with horse,
 Resistless in his rapid course,
 O'er all their realms his warring thousands poured ;
 Now his intrepid chiefs surveys,
 And glittering like a god his radiant state displays.

Antistrophe 1.

Fierce as the dragon scaled in gold
 Through the deep files he darts his glowing eye ;
 And pleased their order to behold,
 His gorgeous standard blazing to the sky,
 Rolls onward his Assyrian car,
 Directs the thunder of the war,
 Bids the winged arrows' iron storm advance,
 Against the slow and cumbrous lance.
 What shall withstand the torrent of his sway,
 When dreadful o'er the yielding shores
 Th' impetuous tide of battle roars,
 And sweeps the weak-opposing mounds away ?
 So Persia with resistless might
 Rolls her unnumbered hosts of heroes to the fight.

Strophe 2.

For when misfortune's fraudulent hand
 Prepares to pour the vengeance of the sky,
 What mortal shall her force withstand,
 What rapid speed th' impending fury fly ?
 Gentle at first with flattering smiles
 She spreads her soft enchanting wiles,
 So to her toils allures her destined prey,
 Whence man ne'er breaks unhurt away.
 For thus from ancient times the Fates ordain,
 That Persia's sons should greatly dare,
 Unequalled in the works of war :

Shake with their thund'ring steeds th' ensanguined plain,
Dreadful the hostile walls surround,
And lay their rampired towers in ruins on the ground.

Antistrophe 2.

Taught to behold with fearless eyes,
The whitening billows foam beneath the gale,
They bid the naval forests rise,
Mount the slight barque, unfurl the flying sail,
And o'er the angry ocean bear
To distant realms the storm of war.
For this with many a sad and gloomy thought
My tortured breast is fraught :
Ah me ! for Persia's absent sons I sigh ;
For whilst in foreign fields they fight,
Our towns exposed to wild affright
An easy prey to the invader lie :
Where, mighty Susa, where thy powers,
To wield the warrior's arms, and guard my regal
towers?

Epode.

Crushed beneath th' assailing foe
Her golden head must Cissia bend ;
Whilst her pale virgins, frantic with despair,
Through all her streets awake the voice of woe ;
And flying with their bosoms bare,
Their purpled stoles in anguish rend :
For all her youth in martial pride,
Like bees that, clustering round their king,
Their dark-embodied squadrons bring,
Attend their sceptred monarch's side,
And stretch across the wat'ry way
From shore to shore their long array.

The Persian dames with many a tender fear
In grief's sad vigils keep the midnight hour ;
Shed on the widowed couch the streaming tear,
And the long absence of their loves deplore.
Each lonely matron feels her pensive breast
Throb with desire, with aching fondness glow,
Since in bright arms her daring warrior drest
Left her to languish in her love-lorn woe.

CHOR. Now ye grave Persians, that your honoured seats
Hold in this ancient house, with prudent care
And deep deliberation, so the State
Requires, consult we, pond'ring the event
Of this great war, which our imperial lord,
The mighty Xerxes from Darius sprung,
The stream of whose rich blood flows in our veins,
Leads against Greece ; whether his arrowy shower
Shot from the strong-braced bow, or the huge spear
High brandished, in the deathful field prevails.
But see, the monarch's mother : like the gods
Her lustre blazes on our eyes. My queen,
Prostrate I fall before her : all advance
With reverence, and in duteous phrase address her.

WHOLE CHOR. Hail queen, of Persia's high-zoned dames
supreme,
Age-honoured mother of the potent Xerxes,
Imperial consort of Darius, hail !
The wife, the mother of the Persian's god,
If yet our former glories fade not from us.

ATOS. And therefore am I come, leaving my house
That shines with gorgeous ornaments and gold,
Where in past days Darius held with me
His royal residence. With anxious care
My heart is tortured : I will tell you, friends,
My thoughts, not otherwise devoid of fear,

Lest mighty wealth with haughty foot o'erturn
And trample in the dust that happiness,
Which, not unblessed by Heaven, Darius raised.
For this with double force unquiet thoughts
Past utterance fill my soul ; that neither wealth
With all its golden stores, where men are wanting,
Claims reverence ; nor the light, that beams from power,
Shines on the man, whom wealth disdains to grace.
The golden stores of wealth indeed are ours ;
But for the light, such in the house I deem
The presence of its lord, there I have fears.
Advise me then you, whose experienced age
Supports the state of Persia : prudence guides
Your councils, always kind and faithful to me.

CHOR. Speak, royal lady, what thy will, assured,
We want no second bidding, where our power
In word or deed waits on our zeal : our hearts
In this with honest duty shall obey thee.

ATOS. Oft, since my son hath marched his mighty host
Against th' Ionians, warring to subdue
Their country, have my slumbers been disturbed
With dreams of dread portent ; but most last night,
With marks of plainest proof. I'll tell thee then.
Methought two women stood before my eyes
Gorgeously vested, one in Persian robes
Adorned, the other in the Doric garb.
With more than mortal majesty they moved,
Of peerless beauty ; sisters too they seemed,
Though distant each from each they chanced to dwell,
In Greece the one, on the barbaric coast
The other. 'Twixt them soon dissension rose :
My son then hasted to compose their strife,
Soothed them to fair accord, beneath his car
Yokes them, and reins their harnessed necks. The one,

Exulting in her rich array, with pride
Arching her stately neck, obeyed the reins ;
The other with indignant fury spurned
The car, and dashed it piecemeal, rent the reins,
And tore the yoke asunder : down my son
Fell from the seat, and instant at his side
His father stands, Darius, at his fall
Impressed with pity : him when Xerxes saw,
Glowing with grief and shame he rends his robes.
This was the dreadful vision of the night.
When I arose, in the sweet flowing stream
I bathed my hands, and on the incensed altars
Presenting my oblations to the gods
T' avert these ills, an eagle I beheld
Fly to the altar of the sun : aghast
I stood, my friends, and speechless ; when a hawk
With eager speed runs thither, furious cuffs
The eagle with his wings, and with his talons
Unplumes his head ; meantime th' imperial bird
Cowers to the blows defenceless. Dreadful this
To me that saw it, and to you that hear.
My son, let conquest crown his arms, would shine
With dazzling glory ; but should fortune frown,
The State indeed presumes not to arraign
His sovereignty, yet how, his honour lost,
How shall he sway the sceptre of this land ?

CHOR. We would not, royal lady, sink thy soul
With fear in the excess, nor raise it high
With confidence. Go then, address the gods ;
If thou hast seen aught ill, entreat their power
T' avert that ill, and perfect every good
To thee, thy sons, the State, and all thy friends.
Then to the earth, and to the mighty dead
Behoves thee pour libations : gently call

Him that was once thy husband, whom thou saw'st
In visions of the night ; entreat his shade
From the deep realms beneath to send to light
Triumph to thee, and to thy son ; whate'er
Bears other import, to enwrap, to hide it
Close in the covering earth's profoundest gloom.
This in the presage of my thoughts that flow
Benevolent to thee, have I proposed ;

And all, we trust, shall be successful to thee. [dreams

ATOS. Thy friendly judgment first hath placed these
In a fair light, confirming the event
Benevolent to my son, and to my house.
May all the good be ratified ! These rites
Shall, at thy bidding, to the powers of Heaven,
And to the manes of our friends, be paid
In order meet, when I return : meanwhile
Indulge me, friends, who wish to be informed
Where, in what clime, the towers of Athens rise.

CHOR. Far in the west, where sets th' imperial sun.

ATOS. Yet my son willed the conquest of this town.

CHOR. May Greece through all her States bend to his
power.

ATOS. Send they embattled numbers to the field ?

CHOR. A force, that to the Medes hath wrought much woe.

ATOS. Have they sufficient treasures in their houses ?

CHOR. Their rich earth yields a copious fount of silver.

ATOS. From the strong bow wing they the barbed shaft ?

CHOR. They grasp the stout spear, and the massy shield.

ATOS. What monarch reigns, whose power commands
their ranks ?

CHOR. Slaves to no lord, they own no kingly power.

ATOS. How can they then resist th' invading foe ?

CHOR. As to spread havoc through the numerous host,
That round Darius formed their glittering files,

ATOS. Thy words strike deep, and wound the parent's
breast,

Whose sons are marched to such a dangerous field.

CHOR. But, if I judge aright, thou soon shalt hear
Each circumstance ; for this way, mark him, speeds
A Persian messenger : he bears, be sure,
Tidings of high import, or good or ill.

ATOSSA, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. Woe to the towns through Asia's peopled
Woe to the land of Persia, once the port [realms !
Of boundless wealth, how is thy glorious state
Vanished at once, and all thy spreading honours
Fall'n, lost ! Ah me ! unhappy is his task
That bears unhappy tidings : but constraint
Compels me to relate this tale of woe.
Persians, the whole barbaric host is fall'n.

CHOR. O horror, horror ! What a baleful train
Of recent ills ! Ah Persians, as he speaks
Of ruin, let your tears stream to the earth.

MES. It is even so, all ruin ; and myself,
Beyond all hope returning, view this light.

CHOR. How tedious and oppressive is the weight
Of age, reserved to hear these hopeless ills !

MES. I speak not from report ; but these mine eyes
Beheld the ruin which my tongue would utter.

CHOR. Woe, woe is me ! Then has the iron storm,
That darkened from the realms of Asia, poured
In vain its arrowy shower on sacred Greece.

MES. In heaps th' unhappy dead lie on the strand
Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shores.

CHOR. Unhappy friends, sunk, perished in the sea ;
Their bodies 'midst the wreck of shattered ships,
Mangled, and rolling on th' encumbered waves !

MES. Nought did their bows avail, but all the troops
In the first conflict of the ships were lost.

CHOR. Raise the funereal cry, with dismal notes
Wailing the wretched Persians. Oh, how ill
They planned their measures, all their army perished !

MES. O Salamis, how hateful is thy name !
And groans burst from me when I think of Athens.

CHOR. How dreadful to her foes ! Call to remembrance

How many Persian dames, wedded in vain,
Hath Athens of their noble husbands widowed !

ATOS. Astonied with these ills, my voice thus long
Hath wanted utterance : griefs like these exceed
The power of speech, or question : yet e'en such,
Inflicted by the gods, must mortal man
Constrained by hard necessity endure.
But tell me all, without distraction tell me,
All this calamity, though many a groan
Burst from thy labouring heart. Who is not fallen ?
What leader must we wail ? What sceptred chief
Dying hath left his troops without a lord ?

MES. Xerxes himself lives, and beholds the light.

ATOS. That word beams comfort on my house, a ray
That brightens through the melancholy gloom.

MES. Artembares, the potent chief that led
Ten thousand horse, lies slaughtered on the rocks
Of rough Sileniæ. The great Dadaces,
Beneath whose standard marched a thousand horse,
Pierced by a spear fell headlong from the ship.
Tenagon, bravest of the Bactrians, lies
Rolled on the wave-worn beach of Ajax' isle.
Lilæus, Arsames, Argestes dash
With violence in death against the rocks
Where nest the silver doves. Arcteus, that dwelt

Near to the fountains of the Ægyptian Nile,
Adeues, and Pheresba, and Pharnuchus,
Fell from one ship. Matallus, Chrysa's chief,
That led his dark'ning squadrons, thrice ten thousand,
On jet-black steeds, with purple gore distained
The yellow of his thick and shaggy beard.
The Magian Arabus, and Artames
From Bactra, mould'ring on the dreary shore
Lie low. Amistris, and Amphistreus there
Grasps his war-wearied spear ; there prostrate lies
Th' illustrious Ariomardus ; long his loss
Shall Sardis weep : the Mysian Sisames,
And Tharybis, that o'er the burdened deep
Led five times fifty vessels ; Lerna gave
The hero birth, and manly grace adorned
His pleasing form, but low in death he lies
Unhappy in his fate. Syennesis,
Cilicia's warlike chief, who dared to front
The foremost dangers, singly to the foes
A terror, there too found a glorious death.
These chieftains to my sad remembrance rise,
Relating but a few of many ills.

ATOS. This is the height of ill, ah me ! and shame
To Persia, grief, and lamentation loud.
But tell me this, afresh renew thy tale,
What was the number of the Grecian fleet,
That in fierce conflict their bold barques should dare
Rush to encounter with the Persian hosts.

MES. Know then, in numbers the barbaric fleet
Was far superior : in ten squadrons, each
Of thirty ships, Greece ploughed the deep ; of these
One held a distant station. Xerxes led
A thousand ships ; their number well I know ;
Two hundred more, and seven, that swept the seas

With speediest sail : this was their full amount.
And in th' engagement seemed we not secure
Of victory? But unequal fortune sunk
Our scale in fight, discomfiting our host.

ATOS. The gods preserve the city of Minerva.

MES. The walls of Athens are impregnable,
Their firmest bulwarks her heroic sons.

ATOS. Which navy first advanced to the attack?
Who led to th' onset, tell me ; the bold Greeks,
Or, glorying in his numerous fleet, my son?

MES. Our evil genius, lady, or some god
Hostile to Persia, led to ev'ry ill.
Forth from the troops of Athens came a Greek,
And thus addressed thy son, th' imperial Xerxes :
"Soon as the shades of night descend, the Grecians
Shall quit their station ; rushing to their oars
They mean to separate, and in secret flight
Seek safety." At these words the royal chief,
Little conceiving of the wiles of Greece
And gods averse, to all the naval leaders
Gave his high charge : "Soon as yon sun shall cease
To dart his radiant beams, and dark'ning night
Ascends the temple of the sky, arrange
In three divisions your well-ordered ships,
And guard each pass, each outlet of the seas :
Others enring around this rocky isle
Of Salamis : should Greece escape her fate,
And work her way by secret flight, your heads
Shall answer the neglect." This harsh command
He gave, exulting in his mind, nor knew
What fate designed. With martial discipline
And prompt obedience, snatching a repast,
Each mariner fixed well his ready oar.
Soon as the golden sun was set, and night

Advanced, each trained to ply the dashing oar
Assumed his seat ; in arms each warrior stood,
Troop cheering troop through all the ships of war.
Each to the appointed station steers his course ;
And through the night his naval force each chief
Fixed to secure the passes. Night advanced,
But not by secret flight did Greece attempt
T' escape. The morn, all beauteous to behold,
Drawn by white steeds bounds o'er th' enlightened earth ;
At once from ev'ry Greek with glad acclaim
Burst forth the song of war, whose lofty notes
The echo of the island rocks returned,
Spreading dismay through Persia's hosts thus fallen
From their high hopes ; no flight this solemn strain
Portended, but deliberate valour bent
On daring battle ; whilst the trumpet's sound
Kindled the flames of war. But when their oars,
The pæan ended, with impetuous force
Dashed the resounding surges, instant all
Rushed on in view ; in orderly array
The squadron on the right first led, behind
Rode their whole fleet ; and now distinct we heard
From ev'ry part this voice of exhortation :
" Advance, ye sons of Greece, from thralldom save
Your country, save your wives, your children save,
The temples of your gods, the sacred tomb
Where rest your honoured ancestors ; this day
The common cause of all demands your valour."
Meantime from Persia's hosts the deep'ning shout
Answered their shout ; no time for cold delay ;
But ship 'gainst ship its brazen beak impelled.
First to the charge a Grecian galley rushed ;
Ill the Phœnician bore the rough attack,
Its sculptured prow all shattered. Each advanced

Daring an opposite. The deep array
Of Persia at the first sustained th' encounter ;
But their thronged numbers, in the narrow seas
Confined, want room for action ; and deprived
Of mutual aid beaks clash with beaks, and each
Breaks all the other's oars : with skill disposed
The Grecian navy circled them around
With fierce assault ; and rushing from its height
Th' inverted vessel sinks : the sea no more
Wears its accustomed aspect, with foul wrecks
And blood disfigured ; floating carcasses
Roll on the rocky shores ; the poor remains
Of the barbaric armament to flight
Ply ev'ry oar inglorious ; onward rush
The Greeks amidst the ruins of the fleet,
As through a shoal of fish caught in a net,
Spreading destruction : the wide ocean o'er
Wailings are heard, and loud laments, till night
With darkness on her brow brought grateful truce.
Should I recount each circumstance of woe,
Ten times on my unfinished tale the sun
Would set ; for be assured that not one day
Could close the ruin of so vast an host.

ATOS. Ah, what a boundless sea of woe hath burst
On Persia, and the whole barbaric race !

MES. These are not half, not half our ills ; on these
Came an assemblage of calamities,
That sunk us with a double weight of woe.

ATOS. What fortune can be more unfriendly to us
Than this ? Say on, what dread calamity
Sunk Persia's host with greater weight of woe.

MES. Whoe'er of Persia's warriors glowed in prime
Of vig'rous youth, or felt their generous souls
Expand with courage, or for noble birth

Shone with distinguished lustre, or excelled
In firm and duteous loyalty, all these
Are fall'n, ignobly, miserably fall'n.

ATOS. Alas their ruthless fate, unhappy friends !
But in what manner, tell me, did they perish ?

MES. Full against Salamis an isle arises
Of small circumference, to the anchored barque
Unfaithful ; on the promontory's brow,
That overlooks the sea, Pan loves to lead
The dance ; to this the monarch sends these chiefs,
That when the Grecians from their shattered ships
Should here seek shelter, these might hew them down
An easy conquest, and secure the strand
To their sea-wearied friends ; ill judging what
Th' event : but when the fav'ring god to Greece
Gave the proud glory of this naval fight,
Instant in all their glitt'ring arms they leaped
From their light ships, and all the island round
Encompassed, that our bravest stood dismayed ;
Whilst broken rocks whirled with tempestuous force,
And storms of arrows crushed them ; then the Greeks
Rush to th' attack at once, and furious spread
The carnage, till each mangled Persian fell.
Deep were the groans of Xerxes, when he saw
This havoc ; for his seat, a lofty mound
Commanding the wide sea, o'erlooked his hosts.
With rueful cries he rent his royal robes,
And through his troops embattled on the shore
Gave signal of retreat ; then started wild,
And fled disordered. To the former ills
These are fresh miseries to awake thy sighs.

ATOS. Invidious fortune, how thy baleful power
Hath sunk the hopes of Persia ! Bitter fruit
My son hath tasted from his purposed vengeance

On Athens famed for arms ; the fatal field
Of Marathon, red with barbaric blood,
Sufficed not ; that defeat he thought t' avenge,
And pulled this hideous ruin on his head.
But tell me, if thou canst, where didst thou leave
The ships, that happily escaped the wreck ?

MES. The poor remains of Persia's scattered fleet
Spread ev'ry sail for flight, as the wind drives,
In wild disorder. And on land no less
The ruined army ; in Bœotia some,
With thirst oppressed, at Crene's cheerful rills
Were lost ; forespent with breathless speed some pass
The fields of Phocis, some the Doric plain,
And near the gulf of Melia, the rich vale
Through which Sperchius rolls his friendly stream.
Achaia thence and the Thessalian state
Received our famished train ; the greater part
Through thirst and hunger perished there, oppressed
At once by both : but we our painful steps
Held onwards to Magnesia, and the land
Of Macedonia, o'er the ford of Axios,
And Bolbe's sedgy marches, and the heights
Of steep Pangæos, to the realms of Thrace.
That night, ere yet the season, breathing frore
Rushed winter, and with ice encrusted o'er
The flood of sacred Strymon : such as owned
No god till now, awe-struck, with many a prayer
Adored the earth and sky. When now the troops
Had ceased their invocations to the gods,
O'er the stream's solid crystal they began
Their march ; and we, who took our early way
Ere the sun darted his warm beams, passed safe :
But when his burning orb with fiery rays
Unbound the middle current, down they sunk

Each over other ; happiest he who found
 The speediest death ; the poor remains that 'scaped,
 With pain through Thrace dragged on their toilsome march,
 A feeble few, and reached their native soil ;
 That Persia sighs through all her States, and mourns
 Her dearest youth. This is no feigned tale ;
 But many of the ills, that burst upon us
 In dreadful vengeance, I refrain to utter.

CHOR. O fortune, heavy with affliction's load,
 How hath thy foot crushed all the Persian race !

ATOS. Ah me, what sorrows for our ruined host
 Oppress my soul ! Ye visions of the night
 Haunting my dreams, how plainly did you show
 These ills ! You set them in too fair a light.
 Yet, since your bidding hath in this prevailed,
 First to the gods wish I to pour my prayers,
 Then to the mighty dead present my off'rings,
 Bringing libations from my house : too late,
 I know, to change the past ; yet for the future,
 If haply better fortune may await it.
 Behoves you, on this sad event, to guide
 Your friends with faithful counsels. Should my son
 Return ere I have finished, let your voice
 Speak comfort to him ; friendly to his house
 Attend him, nor let sorrow rise on sorrows.

Strophe.

Awful sovereign of the skies,
 When now o'er Persia's numerous host
 Thou bad'st the storm with ruin rise,
 All her proud vaunts of glory lost,
 Ecbatana's imperial head
 By thee was wrapt in sorrow's dark'ning shade
 Through Susa's palaces with loud lament,

By their soft hands their veils all rent,
 The copious tear the virgins pour,
 That trickles their bare bosoms o'er.
 From her sweet couch up starts the widowed bride,
 Her lord's loved image rushing on her soul,
 Throws the rich ornaments of youth aside,
 And gives her griefs to flow without control :
 Her griefs not causeless ; for the mighty slain
 Our melting tears demand, and sorrow-softened strain.

Antistrophe.

Now her wailings wide despair
 Pours these exhausted regions o'er ;
 Xerxes, ill-fated, led the war ;
 Xerxes, ill-fated, leads no more ;
 Xerxes sent forth th' unwise command,
 The crowded ships unpeopled all the land ;
 That land, o'er which Darius held his reign,
 Courting the arts of peace, in vain,
 O'er all his grateful realms adored,
 The stately Susa's gentle lord.
 Black o'er the waves his burdened vessels sweep,
 For Greece elate the warlike squadrons fly ;
 Now crushed and whelmed beneath th' indignant deep
 The shattered wrecks and lifeless heroes lie :
 Whilst, from the arms of Greece escaped, with toil
 Th' unsheltered monarch roams o'er Thracia's dreary soil.

Epode.

The first in battle slain
 By Cychrea's craggy shore
 Through sad constraint, ah me ! forsaken lie,
 All pale and smeared with gore ;
 Raise high the mournful strain,

And let the voice of anguish pierce the sky :
Or roll beneath the roaring tide,
By monsters rent of touch abhorred ;
Whilst through the widowed mansion echoing wide
Sounds the deep groan, and wails its slaughtered lord :
Pale with his fears the helpless orphan there
Gives the full stream of plaintive grief to flow ;
Whilst age its hoary head in deep despair
Bends, listening to the shrieks of woe.
With sacred awe
The Persian law
No more shall Asia's realms revere ;
To their lord's hand,
At his command,
No more the exacted tribute bear.
Who now falls prostrate at the monarch's throne ?
His regal greatness is no more.
Now no restraint the wanton tongue shall own,
Free from the golden curb of power ;
For on the rocks, washed by the beating flood,
His awe-commanding nobles lie in blood.

ATOSSA, CHORUS.

ATOSSA. Whoe'er, my friends, in the rough stream of life
Hath struggled with affliction, thence is taught
That, when the flood begins to swell, the heart
Fondly fears all things : when the fav'ring gale
Of fortune smooths the current, it expands
With unsuspecting confidence, and deems
That gale shall always breathe. So to my eyes
All things now wear a formidable shape,
And threaten from the gods : my ears are pierced
With sounds far other than of song. Such ills
Dismay my sick'ning soul : hence from my house

Nor glitt'ring car attends me, nor the train
Of wonted state, whilst I return, and bear
Libations soothing to the father's shade
In the son's cause ; delicious milk, that foams
White from the sacred heifer : liquid honey,
Extract of flowers ; and from its virgin fount
The running crystal ; this pure draught, that flowed
From th' ancient vine, of power to bathe the spirits
In joy ; the yellow olive's fragrant fruit,
That glories in its leaves' unfading verdure ;
With flowers of various hues, earth's fairest offspring,
Inwreathed. But you, my friends, amidst these rites
Raise high your solemn warblings, and invoke
Your lord, divine Darius ; I meanwhile
Will pour these off'rings to the infernal gods.

CHOR. Yes, royal lady, Persia's honoured grace,
To earth's dark chambers pour thy off'rings : we
With choral hymns will supplicate the powers
That guide the dead, to be propitious to us.
And you, that o'er the realms of night extend
Your sacred sway, the mighty earth, and thee
Hermes ; thee chief, tremendous king, whose throne
Awes with supreme dominion, I adjure :
Send, from your gloomy regions, send his shade
Once more to visit this ethereal light ;
That he alone, if aught of dread event
He sees yet threat'ning Persia, may disclose
To us poor mortals Fate's extreme decree.

Hears the honoured godlike king?
These barbaric notes of woe,
Taught in descant sad to ring,
Hears he in the shades below?
Thou, O Earth, and you, that lead
Through your sable realms the dead,

Guide him as he takes his way,
And give him to th' ethereal light of day !

Let th' illustrious shade arise
Glorious in his radiant state,
More than blazed before our eyes,
Ere sad Susa mourned his fate.
Dear he lived, his tomb is dear,
Shining virtues we revere,
Send then, monarch of the dead,
Such as Darius was, Darius' shade.

He in realm-unpeopling war
Wasted not his subjects' blood,
Godlike in his will to spare,
In his councils wise and good.
Rise then, sovereign lord, to light ;
On this mound's sepulchral height
Lift thy sock in saffron dyed,
And rear thy rich tiara's regal pride !

Great and good, Darius, rise :
Lord of Persia's lord, appear,
Thus invoked with thrilling cries
Come, our tale of sorrow hear !
Woe her Stygian pennons spreads,
Brooding darkness o'er our heads ;
For stretched along the dreary shore
The flower of Asia lies distained with gore.

Rise, Darius, awful power ;
Long for thee our tears shall flow.
Why thy ruined empire o'er
Swells this double flood of woe ?
Sweeping o'er the azure tide
Rode thy navy's gallant pride ;
Navy now no more, for all
Beneath thewhelming wave——

GHOST OF DARIUS, ATOSSA, CHORUS.

DARIUS. Ye faithful Persians, honoured now in age,
 Once the companions of my youth, what ills
 Afflict the State? The firm earth groans, it opes,
 Disclosing its vast deeps; and near my tomb
 I see my wife: this shakes my troubled soul
 With fearful apprehensions; yet her offerings
 Pleased I received. And you around my tomb
 Chanting the lofty strain, whose solemn air
 Draws forth the dead, with grief-tempered notes
 Mournfully call me: not with ease the way
 Leads to this upper air; and the stern gods,
 Prompt to admit, yield not a passage back
 But with reluctance: much with them my power
 Availing, with no tardy step I come.

Say then, with what new ill doth Persia groan?

CHOR. My wonted awe o'ercomes me; in thy presence
 I dare not raise my eyes, I dare not speak.

DAR. Since from the realms below, by thy sad strains
 Adjured, I come, speak, let thy words be brief,
 Say whence thy grief, tell me unawed by fear.

CHOR. I dread to forge a flattering tale, I dread
 To grieve thee with a harsh offensive truth. [dame,

DAR. Since fear hath chained his tongue, high-honoured
 Once my imperial consort, check thy tears,
 Thy griefs; and speak distinctly. Mortal man
 Must bear his lot of woe; afflictions rise
 Many from sea, many from land, if life
 Be haply measured through a lengthened course.

ATOS. O thou, that graced with fortune's choicest gifts
 Surpassing mortals, whilst thine eye beheld
 Yon sun's ethereal rays, liv'dst like a god
 Blest 'midst thy Persians; blest I deem thee now

In death, ere sunk in this abyss of ills ;
Darius, hear at once our sum of woe,
Ruin through all her States hath crushed thy Persia.

DAR. By pestilence, or faction's furious storms ?

ATOS. Not so : near Athens perished all our troops.

DAR. Say, of my sons which led the forces thither ?

ATOS. The impetuous Xerxes, thinning all the land.

DAR. By sea or land dared he this rash attempt ?

ATOS. By both : a double front the war presented.

DAR. A host so vast what march conducted o'er ?

ATOS. From shore to shore he bridged the Hellespont.

DAR. What, could he chain the mighty Bosphorus ?

ATOS. E'en so, some god assisting his design.

DAR. Some god of power to cloud his better sense.

ATOS. Th' event now shows what mischiefs he achieved.

DAR. What suffered they, for whom your sorrows flow ?

ATOS. His navy sunk spreads ruin through the camp.

DAR. Fell all his host beneath the slaught'ring spear ?

ATOS. Susa, through all her streets, mourns her lost sons.

DAR. How vain the succour, the defence of arms !

ATOS. In Bactra age and grief are only left.

DAR. Ah, what a train of warlike youth is lost !

ATOS. Xerxes, astonished, desolate, alone——

DAR. How will this end ? Nay, pause not. Is he safe ?

ATOS. Fled o'er the bridge, that joined the adverse
strands.

DAR. And reached this shore in safety ? Is this true ?

ATOS. True are thy words, and not to be gainsaid.

DAR. With what a winged course the oracles

Haste their completion ! With the lightning's speed
Jove on my son hath hurled his threatened vengeance :
Yet I implored the gods that it might fall
In time's late process : but when rashness drives
Impetuous on, the scourge of Heaven upraised

Lashes the fury forward ; hence these ills
Pour headlong on my friends. Not weighing this
My son, with all the fiery pride of youth,
Hath quickened their arrival, whilst he hoped
To bind the sacred Hellespont, to hold
The raging Bosphorus, like a slave, in chains.
And dared th' advent'rous passage, bridging firm
With links of solid iron his wondrous way,
To lead his numerous host ; and, swelled with thoughts
Presumptuous, deemed, vain mortal, that his power
Should rise above the gods, and Neptune's might.
And was not this the frenzy of the soul ?
But much I fear lest all my treasured wealth
Fall to some daring hand an easy prey.

ATOS. This from too frequent converse with bad men
Th' impetuous Xerxes learned : these caught his ear
With thy great deeds, as winning for thy sons
Vast riches with thy conquering spear, whilst he
Tim'rous and slothful never, save in sport,
Lifted his lance, nor added to the wealth
Won by his noble fathers. This reproach,
Oft by bad men repeated, urged his soul
T' attempt this war, and lead his troops to Greece.

DAR. Great deeds have they achieved, and memorable
For ages : never hath this wasted State
Suffered such ruin, since Heaven's awful king
Gave to one lord Asia's extended plains
White with innumerable flocks, and to his hands
Consigned th' imperial sceptre. Her brave hosts
A Mede first led. The virtues of his son
Fixed firm the empire, for his temperate soul
Breathed prudence. Cyrus next, by fortune graced,
Adorned the throne, and blessed his grateful friends
With peace : he to his mighty monarchy

Joined Lydia, and the Phrygians; to his power
Ionia bent reluctant; but the gods
With victory his gentle virtues crowned.
His son then wore the regal diadem.
Next, to disgrace his country, and to stain
The splendid glories of this ancient throne,
Rose Mardus: him with righteous vengeance fired
Artaphrenes, and his confederate chiefs,
Crushed in his palace: Maraphis assumed
The sceptre: after him Artaphrenes.
Me next to this exalted eminence,
Crowning my great ambition, fortune raised;
In many a glorious field my glittering spear
Flamed in the van of Persia's numerous hosts;
But never wrought such ruin to the State.
Xerxes, my son, in all the pride of youth
Listens to youthful counsels, my commands
No more remembered: hence, my hoary friends,
Not the whole line of Persia's sceptred lords,
You know it well, so wasted her brave sons.

CHOR. Why this? To what fair end are these thy words
Directed? Sovereign lord, instruct thy Persians
How, 'midst this ruin, best to guide their State.

DAR. No more 'gainst Greece lead your embattled hosts;
Not though your deepening phalanx spreads the field
Outnumbering theirs: their very earth fights for them.

CHOR. What may thy words import? How fight for
them?

DAR. With famine it destroys your cumbrous train.

CHOR. Choice levies, prompt for action, will we send.

DAR. Those, in the fields of Greece that now remain,
Shall not revisit safe the Persian shore.

CHOR. What, shall not all the host of Persia pass
Again from Europe o'er the Hellespont?

DAR. Of all their numbers few, if aught avails
The faith of heaven-sent oracles to him
That weighs the past, in their accomplishment
Not partial : hence he left, in faithless hope
Confiding, his selected train of heroes.
These have their station where Asopus flows
Wat'ring the plain, whose grateful currents roll
Diffusing plenty through Bœotia's fields.
There misery waits to crush them with the load
Of heaviest ills, in vengeance for their proud
And impious daring ; for where'er they held
Through Greece their march, they feared not to
profane
The statues of the gods ; their hallowed shrines
Emblazed, o'erturned their altars, and in ruins,
Rent from their firm foundations, to the ground
Levelled their temples. Such their frantic deeds,
Nor less their sufferings : greater still await them ;
For vengeance hath not wasted all her stores,
The heap yet swells : for in Plataea's plains
Beneath the Doric spear the clotted mass
Of carnage shall arise, that the high mounds,
Piled o'er the dead, to late posterity
Shall give this silent record to men's eyes,
That proud aspiring thoughts but ill beseem
Weak mortals : for oppression, when it springs,
Puts forth the blade of vengeance, and its fruit
Yields a ripe harvest of repentant woe.
Behold this vengeance, and remember Greece,
Remember Athens : henceforth let not pride,
Her present state disdaining, strive to grasp
Another's, and her treasured happiness
Shed on the ground : such insolent attempts
Awake the vengeance of offended Jove.

But you, whose age demands more temperate thoughts,
With words of well-placed counsel teach his youth
To curb that pride, which from the gods calls down
Destruction on his head. And thou, whose age
The miseries of thy Xerxes sink with sorrow,
Go to thy house, thence choose the richest robe,
And meet thy son ; for through the rage of grief
His gorgeous vestments from his royal limbs
Are foully rent. With gentlest courtesy
Soothe his affliction ; for his duteous ear,
I know, will listen to thy voice alone.
Now to the realms of darkness I descend.
My ancient friends, farewell, and 'midst these ills
Each day in pleasures bathe your drooping spirits,
For treasured riches nought avail the dead.

ATOSSA, CHORUS.

CHORUS. These many present, many future ills
Denounced on Persia sink my soul with grief.

ATOS. Unhappy fortune, what a tide of ills
Bursts o'er me ! Chief this foul disgrace, which shows
My son divested of his rich attire,
His royal robes all rent, distracts my thoughts.
But I will go, choose the most gorgeous vest,
And haste to meet my son. Ne'er in his woes
Will I forsake whom my soul holds most dear.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Ye powers that rule the skies,
Memory recalls our great, our happy fate,
Our well-appointed state,
The scenes of glory opening to our eyes,
When this vast empire o'er

The good Darius, with each virtue blest
 That forms a monarch's breast,
 Shielding his subjects with a father's care,
 Invincible in war,
 Extended like a god his awful power.
 Then spread our arms their glory wide,
 Guarding to peace her golden reign;
 Each towered city saw with pride
 Safe from the toils of war her homeward marching train.

Antistrophe 1.

Nor Halys' shallow strand
 He passed, nor from his palace moved his state ;
 He spoke ; his word was fate :
 What strong-based cities could his might withstand ?
 Not those that lift their heads
 Where to the sea the floods of Strymon pass,
 Leaving the huts of Thrace ;
 Nor those, that far th' extended ocean o'er
 Stand girt with many a tower ;
 Nor where the Hellespont his broad wave spreads ;
 Nor the firm bastion's rampired might,
 Whose foot the deep Propontis laves ;
 Nor those, that glorying in their height
 Frown o'er the Pontic sea, and shade his darkened waves.

Strophe 2.

Each sea-girt isle around
 Bowed to this monarch : humbled Lesbos bowed ;
 Paros, of its marble proud ;
 Naxos with vines, with olives Samos crowned :
 Him Myconus adored :
 Chios, the seat of beauty ; Andros steep,
 That stretches o'er the deep

To meet the wat'ry Tenos ; him each bay
Bound by th' Icarian sea,
Him Melos, Gnidus, Rhodes confessed their lord :
O'er Cyprus stretched his sceptred hand :
Paphos and Solos owned his power,
And Salamis, whose hostile strand,
The cause of all our woe, is red with Persian gore.

Antistrophe 2.

E'en the proud towns, that reared
Sublime along th' Ionian coast their towers,
Where wealth her treasures pours,
Peopled from Greece, his prudent reign revered.
With such unconquered might
His hardy warriors shook th' embattled fields,
Heroes that Persia yields,
And those from distant realms that took their way,
And wedged in close array
Beneath his glittering banners claimed the fight.
But now these glories are no more ;
Farewell the big war's plumed pride :
The gods have crushed this trophied power,
Sunk are our vanquished arms beneath th' indignant tide.

XERXES, CHORUS.

XERXES. Ah me, how sudden have the storms of fate,
Beyond all thought, all apprehension, burst
On my devoted head ! O Fortune, Fortune !
With what relentless fury hath thy hand
Hurled desolation on the Persian race ;
Woe unsupportable ! The tort'ring thought
Of our lost youth comes rushing on my mind,
And sinks me to the ground. O Jove, that I
Had died with those brave men that died in fight !

CHOR. O thou afflicted monarch, once the lord
Of marshalled armies, of the lustre beamed
From glory's ray o'er Persia, of her sons
The pride, the grace, whom ruin now hath sunk
In blood ! Th' unpeopled land laments her youth
By Xerxes led to slaughter, till the realms
Of death are gorged with Persians ; for the flower
Of all the realm, thousands, whose dreadful bows
With arrowy shower annoyed the foe, are fall'n.

XER. Your fall, heroic youths, distracts my soul.

CHOR. And Asia sinking on her knee, O king,
Oppressed, with griefs oppressed, bends to the earth.

XER. And I, O wretched fortune, I was born
To crush, to desolate my ruined country.

CHOR. I have no voice, no swelling harmony,
No descant, save these notes of woe,
Harsh, and responsive to the sullen sigh,
Rude strains, that unmelodious flow,
To welcome thy return.

XER. Then bid them flow, bid the wild measures flow,
Hollow, unmusical, the notes of grief ;
They suit my fortune, and dejected state.

CHOR. Yes, at thy royal bidding shall the strain
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul ;
The sufferings of my bleeding country plain,
And bid the mournful measures roll.
Again the voice of wild despair
With shrilling shrieks shall pierce the air ;
For high the god of war his flaming crest
Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest blest,
And Persia's withered force confounded,
Dashed on the dreary beach her heroes slain,
Or whelmed them in the darkened main.

XER. To swell thy griefs ask every circumstance.

CHOR. Where are thy valiant friends, thy chieftains where?
Pharnaces, Susas, and the might
Of Pelagon, and Dotamas? The spear
Of Agabatas bold in fight?
Psammis in mailed cuirass drest,
And Susiscanes' glittering crest?

XER. Dashed from the Tyrian vessel on the rocks
Of Salamis they sunk, and smeared with gore
The heroes on the dreary strand are stretched.

CHOR. Where is Pharnuchus? Ariomardus where,
With every gentle virtue graced?
Lilæus, that from chiefs renowned in war
His high-descended lineage traced?
Where rears Sebalces his crown-circled head?
Where Tharybis to battles bred,
Artembares. Hystæchmes bold,
Memphis, Masistres sheathed in gold?

XER. Wretch that I am! 'These on th' abhorred town
Ogygian Athens, rolled their glowing eyes
Indignant; but at once in the fierce shock
Of battle fell, dashed breathless on the ground.

CHOR. There does the son of Batanochus lie,
Through whose rich veins th' unsullied blood
Of Susamus, down from the lineage high
Of noble Mygabatas flowed:
Alpistus, who with faithful care
Numbered the deepening files of war,
The monarch's eye; on the ensanguined plain
Low is the mighty warrior laid?
Is great Æbares 'mongst the heroes slain,
And Partheus numbered with the dead?
Ah me! those bursting groans deep-charged with woe
The fate of Persia's princes show.

XER. To my grieved memory thy mournful voice,
Tuned to the saddest notes of woe, recalls
My brave friends lost ; and my rent heart returns
In dreadful symphony the sorrowing strain.

CHOR. Yet once more shall I ask thee, yet once more,
Where is the Mardian Xanthes' might,
The daring chief, that from the Pontic shore
Led his strong phalanx to the fight ?
Anchaes where, whose high-raised shield
Flamed foremost in th' embattled field ?
Where the high leaders of thy mail-clad horse,
Däixis and Arsaces where ?
Where Cigdagatas, and Lythimnas' force,
Waving untired his purple spear ?

XER. Entombed, I saw them in the earth entombed ;
Nor did the rolling car with solemn staté
Attend their rites : I followed : low they lie,
Ah me, the once great leaders of my host
Low in the earth, without their honours lie.

CHOR. Oh woe, woe, woe ! Unutterable woe
The demons of revenge have spread ;
And Até from her drear abode below
Rises to view the horrid deed.

XER. Dismay, and rout, and ruin, ills that wait
On man's afflicted fortune, sink us down.

CHOR. Dismay, and rout, and ruin on us wait,
And all the vengeful storms of fate :
Ill flows on ill, on sorrows sorrows rise ;
Misfortune leads her baleful train ;
Before th' Ionian squadrons Persia flies,
Or sinks ingulfed beneath the main :
Fall'n, fall'n is her imperial power,
And conquest on her banners waits no more.

XER. At such a fall, such troops of heroes lost,

How can my soul but sink in deep despair !
Cease thy sad strain.

CHOR. Is all thy glory lost ?

XER. Seest thou these poor remains of my rent robes ?

CHOR. I see, I see.

XER. And this ill-furnished quiver ?

CHOR. Wherefore preserved ?

XER. To store my treasured arrows.

CHOR. Few, very few.

XER. And few my friendly aids.

CHOR. I thought these Grecians shrunk appalled at
arms.

XER. No : they are bold and daring ; these sad eyes
Beheld their violent and deathful deeds.

CHOR. The ruin, say'st thou, of thy shattered fleet ?

XER. And in the anguish of my soul I rent
My royal robes.

CHOR. Woe, woe !

XER. And more than woe.

CHOR. Redoubled, threefold woe !

XER. Disgrace to me,
But triumph to the foe.

CHOR. Are all thy powers
In ruin crushed ?

XER. No satrap guards me now.

CHOR. Thy faithful friends sunk in the roaring main.

XER. Weep, weep their loss, and lead me to my house ;
Answer my grief with grief, an ill return
Of ills for ills. Yet once more raise that strain
Lamenting my misfortunes ; beat thy breast,
Strike, heave the groan ; awake the Mysian strain
To notes of loudest woe ; rend thy rich robes,
Pluck up thy beard, tear off thy hoary locks,
And bathe thine eyes in tears : thus through the streets

Solemn and slow with sorrow lead my steps ;
Lead to my house, and wail the fate of Persia.

CHOR. Yes, once more at thy bidding shall the strain
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul ;
The suffering of my bleeding country plain,
And bid the Mysian measures roll.
Again the voice of wild despair
With shrilling shrieks shall pierce the air ;
For high the god of war his flaming crest
Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest blest,
And Persia's withered force confounded,
Dashed on the dreary beach her heroes slain,
Or whelmed them in the darkened main.

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